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THE

WORKS

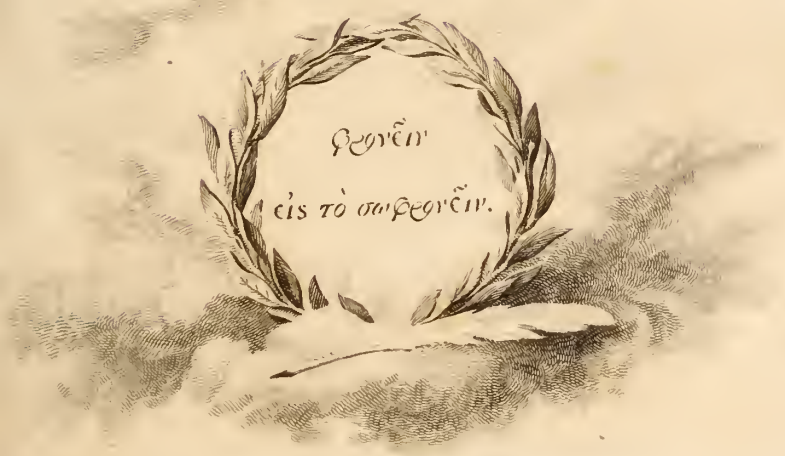
OF

RICHARD HURD, D. D.

LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER.

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOL. V.



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THEOLOGICAL WORKS.

VOL. I.

TWELVE SERMONS

INTRODUCTORY

TO THE STUDY OF

THE PROPHECIES.

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AN

INTRODUCTION

TO THE STUDY OF THE

PROPHECIES

CONCERNING THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH;

AND, IN PARTICULAR,

CONCERNING THE CHURCH OF PAPAL ROME:

IN TWELVE SERMONS,

PREACHED IN LINCOLN'S-INN-CHAPEL,

AT THE LECTURE OF

THE RIGHT REV. WILLIAM WARBURTON,

LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER.

Ita, si potuero, stylo moderabor meo, ut nec ea, quæ supersint, dicam, nec ea, quæ satis sint, prætermittam.

Augustin. C. D. l. xvii. c. 1.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM, LORD MANSFIELD,

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF ENGLAND,

AND

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

SIR JOHN EARDLEY WILMOT, KNT.

LATE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE COMMON PLEAS,

TRUSTEES FOR THIS LECTURE,

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS

ARE MOST HUMBLY INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR,

R. HURD.

LINCOLN'S-INN,
MARCH 2, 1772.

EXTRACT

FROM THE

DEED OF TRUST

FOR FOUNDING THIS LECTURE.

AN Indenture, bearing date July 21, 1768, sets forth, "That the right reverend WILLIAM "Lord Bishop of Gloucester has transferred the "sum of 500*l. Bank four per cent. annuities* "*consolidated,* to the right honourable WIL- "LIAM LORD MANSFIELD, Lord Chief Justice "of his Majesty's Court of King's Bench, the "right honourable SIR JOHN EARDLEY WILMOT, "Lord Chief Justice of his Majesty's Court of "Common Pleas, and the honourable CHARLES

" YORKE[a], of Lincoln's-Inn, in the county of
" Middlesex, UPON TRUST, for the purpose of
" founding a *Lecture*, in the form of a Sermon,
" *To prove the truth of Revealed Religion in*
" *general, and of the Christian in particular,*
" *from the completion of the Prophecies in the*
" *Old and New Testament, which relate to*
" *the Christian church, especially to the apos-*
" *tacy of Papal Rome :* That, in case of any
" vacancy in this trust by the decease of any
" one or more of the above-mentioned Trustees,
" *the place or places shall be filled up, from*
" *time to time and as occasion may require, by*
" *the surviving Trustees, or Trustee, or by*
" *the Executors of the survivor of them :*
" That the Trustees *shall appoint the Preacher*
" *of Lincoln's-Inn for the time being, or some*
" *other able Divine of the Church of England,*

[a] This noble and eminent person was the second son of the Lord Chancellor Hardwicke. He had been, for many years, in the first reputation at the Bar; and having passed through the offices of Sollicitor and Attorney General, was, himself, made Lord Chancellor in January 1770, but died soon after his appointment to that high dignity—*Luctuosum hoc suis; acerbum patriæ; grave bonis omnibus.* CIC.

" to preach this Lecture: That the Lecture " shall be preached every year *in the Chapel of* " *Lincoln's-Inn (if the Society give leave*[b]*)* " *and on the following days, viz. the first* " *Sunday after Michaelmas Term, the Sunday* " *next before and the Sunday next after* " *Hilary Term:* That the Lecturer shall not " preach the said Lecture longer than *for the* " *term of* FOUR YEARS, *and shall not again be* " *nominated to preach the same:* And, when " the term of four years is expired, that the " said Lecturer shall *print and publish, or* " *cause to be printed and published, all the* " *Sermons or Lectures, that shall have been* " *so preached by him.*"

[b] The Society *have* given leave that this Lecture be preached in their Chapel, and on the days specified.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIFTH VOLUME.

SERMON I.

False ideas of Prophecy.

2 PETER i. 21.

Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Spirit of God. p. 1

SERMON II.

The true idea of Prophecy.

REV. xix. 10.

The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy. - - - - 21

SERMON III.

Conclusions from the true idea of Prophecy.

REV. xix. 10.

The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy. - - - p. 44

SERMON IV.

The general argument from Prophecy.

JOHN xiii. 19.

Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe, that I am He. - - - - 74

SERMON V.

Prophecies concerning Christ's *first coming*.

ISAIAH xlii. 9.

Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth, I tell you of them. 102

SERMON VI.

Prophecies concerning Christ's *second coming*.

ISAIAH xlii. 9.

Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth, I tell you of them. 132

SERMON VII.
Prophecies concerning Antichrist.
1 Ep. JOHN ii. 18.
—*ye have heared that Antichrist shall come.*
p. 171

SERMON VIII.
Prejudices against the doctrine of Antichrist.
1 Ep. JOHN ii. 18.
—*ye have heared that Antichrist shall come.*
205

SERMON IX.
The Prophetic style considered.
EZEKIEL xx. 49.
—*They say of me, Doth he not speak parables?* - - - 233

SERMON X.
The style and method of the Apocalypse.
EZEKIEL xx. 49.
—*They say of me, Doth he not speak parables?* - - - - 260

SERMON XI.
Prophetic characters of Antichrist.
LUKE xii. 56.
—*How is it, that ye do not discern this time?*
286

SERMON XII.

Uses of this Inquiry into the Prophecies—Conclusion.

REV. xxii. 7.

Behold, I come quickly: Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. p. 333—352

APPENDIX:

Containing an anonymous Letter to the Author of these Sermons, with his Answer to it. - - - - 363

SERMON I.

FALSE IDEAS OF PROPHECY.

2 PETER, i. 21.

Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Spirit of God.

THE argument from prophecy, in support of the Christian revelation, would be thought more conclusive, at least would be more distinctly apprehended, if men could be kept from mixing their own prejudices and preconceptions with it.

The general question may be expressed thus —"Whether the predictions in the Old and "New Testament do not appear to have been "so far, and in such sense, fulfilled, as to

SERMON I.

" afford a reasonable conviction, that they *came* " *not*, as the text speaks, *by the will of man*, " *but from the Spirit of God.*"

In examining this question, the predictions themselves cannot be too diligently studied, or too cautiously applied: But, while this work is carrying on, we are still to suppose, and should not for a moment forget, that they *may* be, what they manifestly claim to be, of divine suggestion; I mean, we are to admit, not the truth indeed, but the possibility, of such suggestion, till we can fairly make it appear that they are of human contrivance, only.

It will not be denied, that the tenour of Scripture, as well as the text, clearly asserts the divine original and direction of the prophecies. A just reasoner on the subject will, therefore, proceed on this supposition, and only try whether it be well founded. He will consider, whether the construction of the prophecies, and the application of them, be such, as may accord to those pretensions; and will not argue against them on other principles, which they do not admit, or suppose. All this is plainly nothing more than what may be expected from a fair inquirer, and what the rules of good reasoning exact from him.

The use of this conduct would be, To prevent, or set aside, all those fancies and imaginations which too frequently mislead inquirers into the evidence of prophecy; which fill their minds with needless perplexities, and disgrace their books with frivolous and impertinent disquisitions. And, because I take it to be of principal moment, that this *use* be perfectly seen and understood, I shall, *first*, apply myself to justify and explain it.

It is true that *prophecy*, in the very idea of that term, at least in the scriptural idea of it, implies the divine agency; and that, exerted not merely in giving the faculty itself, but in directing all its operations.

Yet I know not how it is that, when men address themselves to the study of the prophetic scriptures, they are apt to let this so necessary idea slip out of their minds; and to discourse upon them just as they would or might do, on the supposition that the prophet was left at liberty to dispense this gift in all respects, as he should think proper. No wonder then, that they should misconceive of its character, and entertain very different notions about the exercise of this power from what the Scriptures give them of it. Nay it is no wonder

SERMON I.

that they should even treat the subject with some scorn, while they judge of it by the rule of human prudence, and not of divine wisdom: for, though they would readily own themselves incapable of pronouncing on the secret counsels of God, if prophecy, in its whole administration, be regarded as proceeding merely from him; yet, from their knowledge of human nature, they would think, and with some reason, they were well able to conceive how the spirit of prophecy would be administered, if man had the disposal of this spirit committed to him.

Now it happens, as I said, (by an inexcusable perverseness, or inattention, indeed, yet in fact it so happens) that, to the consideration of the argument from prophecy, as applied to the proof of the Christian religion, many inquirers bring with them this strange and fatal prejudice; and then their reasonings, or rather conjectures, on the SUBJECT, the END, and the DISPENSATION of prophecy, are only such, as this prejudice may be expected to inspire.

I. Judging for ourselves, and by the light of human investigation only, there might be some ground for supposing, that, if it should please God at any time to confer the gift of prophecy on his favoured servants, they would be solely

or chiefly commissioned to unfold the future fortunes of the most conspicuous states and kingdoms in the world: that so divine a power would embrace, as its peculiar object, the counsels and enterprizes, the successes and triumphs of the most illustrious nations; those especially, which should rise to the summit of empire by generous plans of policy, and by the efforts of public virtue; of *free states*, in a word, such as we know to have flourished in the happier ages of Greece, and such as we still contemplate with admiration in the vast and awful fabric of Consular Rome. This we might think a fit object for the prophetic spirit to present to us; as corresponding in some degree to the sublime character of a prophet; and as most worthy, in our conceptions, of the divine attention and regard.

But how are we surprized to find that this astonishing power, the most signal gift of Heaven to mankind, hath, in its immediate application at least, respected, many times, obscure individuals, whose names and memory are only preserved in one barbarous chronicle, hath been chiefly employed, and, as we are ready to express it, thrown away on one single state, or rather family; inconsiderable in the extent of its power or territory; sequestered

SERMON I.

from the rest of the nations, and hardly known among them[a]; with some mention, perhaps, of greater things, but incidentally touched, as it may seem, and as they chanced to have some connexion with the interests of this sordid people!

Was this a stage, on which it might be expected that the God of heaven would condescend to display the wonders of his prescience; when He kept aloof, as it were, from more august theatres, and would scarcely vouchsafe to have the skirts of his glory seen by the nobler and more distinguished nations of the World?

Such questions as these are sometimes asked. But they are surely asked by those, who con-

[a] Thus Celsus represents the Jews—μηδὲν πώποτε ἀξιόλογον πράξαντας, τοῦ ἐν λόγῳ, οὔθ' ἐν ἀριθμῷ αὐτοὺς ποτε γεγενημένους. ORIG. contra CELS. *l.* iv. *p.* 181. *ed. Spenc. Cantab.* 1677. And in *p.* 175, he represents it as the highest absurdity in such *reptiles* to pretend that their insignificant concerns were the objects of divine prediction, and that the supreme Governor of the world, who had so many greater things upon his hands, should be only solicitous, as it were, to keep up a perpetual intercourse with them. See the whole passage, which the philosopher seems to have taken a pleasure to work up with much oratorical amplification.—Julian, too, was much pleased with this foolish objection.

sider the prophets, as acting wholly on human views and motives; and not as over-ruled in all their predictions by *the spirit of God.* For it is natural enough for vain man, if left to himself in the exercise of the prophetic power, to turn his view towards such objects as appear to him great, in preference to others; and to estimate that greatness by the lustre of fame, in which they shine out to the observation of mankind. But a moment's reflection may shew the probability, the possibility at least, that *God's thoughts are not as our thoughts;* and that, if the prophet's foresight be under the divine influence, there may be reason enough to direct it towards such scenes and objects, as we might be apt to undervalue or overlook. It is even very conceivable, that, if God be the dispenser of prophecy, and not man, all that seems great and illustrious in human affairs may to his all-judging eye appear small and contemptible[b]; and, on the other hand, what we account as nothing, may, for infinite reasons, unknown to us, but so far as he is pleased to discover them, be of that importance as to merit the attention of all his prophets from the foundation of the world.

[b] *Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the dust of the balance.* Isaiah xl. 15.

SERMON I.

It is evident, then, that to reason in this manner on the subject of divine prophecy, is to suffer ourselves to be misled by a poor and vulgar prejudice; and to forget, what we should ever have present to us, the claim of God's prophets to speak, not as themselves *will*, but as they are *moved by his Spirit*.

II. The END, or ultimate purpose of prophetic illumination, is another point, on which many persons are apt to entertain strange fancies, and to frame unwarrantable conclusions, when they give themselves leave to argue on the low supposition, before mentioned.

1. It is then hastily surmized that the scriptural prophecies, if any such be acknowledged, could only be designed, like the Pagan oracles, to sooth the impatient mind under its anxiety about future events; to signify beforehand to states or individuals, engaged in high or hazardous undertakings, what the issue of them would be, that so they might suit their conduct to the information of the prophet, and either pursue their purpose with vigour, or expect their impending fate with resignation. For, what other or worthier end, will some say, can Heaven propose to itself by these extraordinary communications, than to prepare

and qualify such events as it decrees to bring to pass; to animate desponding virtue, on the one hand, or to relieve predestined misery, on the other; to adapt itself, in short, to our necessities by a clear discovery of its will in those many intricate situations, which perplex human prudence, elude human foresight, and, but for this previous admonition, would bear too hard on the natural force, or infirmity of the human mind? Some such idea, as this, was plainly entertained by those of the Pagan philosophers who concluded, *from the existence of a divine power, that there must needs be such a thing as divination*[c]. They thought the attributes of their gods, if any such there were, concerned in giving some notice of futurity to mankind.

2. Others, again, encouraged in this conjectural ingenuity by partial views of scripture, come to persuade themselves that prophecy is an act of *special grace and favour*, not to this or that state, or individuals, indiscriminately, as either may seem to stand in need of it; but to one peculiar and chosen people, who, on some account or other, had merited this extraordinary distinction.

[c] Si dii sint, est divinatio.

SERMON I.

Self-love seems to have suggested this idea to the ancient and modern Jews; and many others, I doubt, are ready enough to suppose with them, that prophecy, under the Mosaic dispensation, had no other reasonable use, or end.

3. Lastly, there are those who erect their thoughts to nobler contemplations, and conclude that this intercourse between heaven and earth can only be carried on with the sublime view of preserving an awful sense of Providence in an impious and careless world.

Vanity, or superstition, may they say, has suggested to particular men, or to societies of men, that their personal or civil concerns are of moment enough to be the subject of divine prophecies, vouchsafed merely for their own proper relief or satisfaction. But nothing less than the maintenance of God's supreme authority over his moral creation could be an object worthy of his interposing in the affairs of men, in so remarkable a manner. To keep alive in their minds a prevailing sense of their dependance upon him, is, then, the ultimate end of prophecy: and what more suitable (will they perhaps add, when warmed with this moral enthusiasm,) to the best ideas we can form of

divine wisdom, than that this celestial light should be afforded to such ages or nations as are most in want of that great and salutary principle?

There is reason to believe, that many of the ancient speculatists reasoned thus on the subject of divination. For, as they argued *from the existence of their gods, to the necessity of divination;* so, again, they turned the argument the other way, *and from the reality of divination, inferred the existence and providence of their gods*[d]. In drawing the *former* conclusion, they shewed themselves to be in the system of those who maintain, that the end of prophecy is *the instruction of men in their civil or personal concerns:* when they drew the *latter*, they seemed to espouse the more enlarged sentiments of such as make the end of prophecy to be, *The instruction of men in the general concerns of religion.*

I omit other instances, that might be given; and concern myself no further with these, than just to observe from them; That the foundation of all such systems is laid in the prejudices of their respective patrons; conjecturing rather

[d] Si divinatio sit, dii sunt.

SERMON I.

what *use* might be made of this faculty, and to what purpose men, according to their different views or capacities, would probably apply it, than regarding it, with due reverence, as directed by the spirit of God. For then they would see, that not one of those ends, nor any other of human conjecture, could be safely relied upon, as being that of prophetic inspiration. Not that all these ends need be rejected as manifestly unworthy of the divine intention; perhaps, each of them, in a certain sense, and with some proper limitation, might without impiety be conceived to enter into it. But neither could it be presumed, if none of those ends could have been pointed out, that therefore there was no reasonable end of divine prophecy; nor could it with modesty be affirmed that the noblest of these ends was certainly that, which the wisdom of God proposed chiefly and ultimately to accomplish by it, unless the information had been given by himself.

III. But this folly of commenting on prophecy by the false lights of the imagination is never more conspicuous, than when the DISPENSATION of this gift, I mean the *mode* of its conveyance, comes to exercise the curiosity of presumptuous men.

"If it be true, will some say, that the Supreme Being hath at any time condescended to enlighten human ignorance by a discovery of future events, these divine notices, whatever the *end* or *subject* of them might be, must have been given in terms so precise, and so clearly predictive of the events to which they are applied, that no doubt could remain either about the interpretation or completion of them.

On the contrary, these pretended prophecies are expressed so ambiguously or obscurely, are so involved in metaphor and darkened by hieroglyphics, that no clear and certain sense can be affixed to them, and the sagacity of a second prophet seems wanting to explain the meaning of the first.

Then, again, when we come to verify these predictions by the light of history, the correspondence is so slight many times, and so indeterminate, that none but an easy faith can assure itself, that they have, in a proper sense, been fulfilled. At the least, there is always room for some degree of suspense and hesitation: either the accomplishment fails in some particulars, or other events might be pointed out, to which the prophecy equally corresponds: so that the result is, a want of that

SERMON I.

entire and perfect conviction, which prophecy, no doubt, was intended to give, and, when fulfilled, must supply [e].

Indeed, continue these inquirers, if our prophecies had been derived from no higher an original, than that of Pagan oracles, we might well enough have supposed them to be of this stamp. When men had nothing to trust to, in their predictions, but their own ingenuity, they did well to deal in equivocal or enigmatic expression, and might leave it to chance, or to the passions of their votaries, to find an application for their random conjectures. But when the prophet is, what he assumes to be, an interpreter of heaven, he may surely afford to speak plainly, and to deliver nothing to us but what shall appear, with the fullest evidence, to be accomplished in the event."

[e] These objections were long since urged by Celsus, who speaks of the Jewish and Christian oracles, as *fanatical, uncertain, and obscure, l.* vii. *p.* 338 — ἄγνωστα, καὶ πάροιστρα, καὶ πάνῃ ἄδηλα, ὧν τὸ μὲν γνῶμα εἰδεὶς ἂν ἔχων νοῦν εὑρεῖν δύναιτο, ἀσαφῆ γὰρ καὶ τὸ μηδέν. as *applicable to other subjects besides those to which they were referred*—τὰς εἰς τὰ περὶ τούτου ἀναφερομένας προφητείας δύνασθαι καὶ ἄλλοις ἐφαρμόζειν πράγμασι. *l.* i. *p.* 39.—nay, *as much more applicable to others, than to Jesus*—μυρίοις ἄλλοις ἐφαρμοσθῆναι δύνασθαι πολὺ πιθανώτερον τὰ προφητικὰ ἢ τῷ Ἰησοῦ. *l.* ii. *p.* 78.

The invidious comparison, here made, between Scriptural prophecies and Pagan oracles, will be considered in its place. To the general principle, assumed by these inquirers, *That divine prophecy must be delivered with the utmost clearness and perspicuity, and fulfilled with irresistible evidence,* it may be sufficient to reply, as before, That, though these inquirers use the words, *divine prophecy,* they manifestly argue on the supposition of its human original, or at least application. In this latter case, indeed, it is likely enough that the prophet, for his own credit, or for what he might fancy to be the sole end of prophecy, might chuse, if he were entrusted with the knowledge of future events, to predict them with all possible clearness, and in such sort that obstinacy itself must see and admit the completion of them: but then, on the *former* supposition, that the prophet was only the minister and instrument of the divine counsels, in the high office committed to him, they will do well to answer, at their leisure, the following questions.

" How do they know in what manner, and with what circumstances, it was fit for divine wisdom to dispense a knowledge of futurity to mankind? How can they previously deter-

SERMON I.

mine the degree of evidence with which a prediction must be either given or fulfilled? What assurance have they, that no reasonable ends could be served by prophecies, expressed with some obscurity, and accomplished in a sense much below what may seem necessary to unavoidable conviction? Can they even pretend, on any clear principles of reason, that very important ends, perhaps the most important, may not be answered by that mode of conveyance, which appears to them so exceptionable? Can they, in a word, determine before-hand, I do not say with certainty, but with any colour of probability; what *must* be the character of divine prophecy, when they know not the reason, most undoubtedly not *all* the reasons, why it is given, and have even no right to demand, that it should be given at all?"

Till these, and other questions of the like sort, be pertinently answered, it must be in vain to censure the ways of Providence, as not corresponding to our imperfect and short-sighted views.

So much for that *capital* prejudice taken from the supposed obscurity of the scriptural

prophecies. Of *smaller* scruples and difficulties on this head, there is no end.

Men may ask, for instance, why the instruments employed in conveying these celestial notices to mankind, are frequently so mean and inconsiderable? The subject of a prediction is the downfall of some mighty state, or the fortune of its governours. Why then is this important revelation intrusted to an obscure priest, or sordid peasant, in preference to the great persons, more immediately concerned in it[f]?

Again; some momentous events have been signified in dreams: why not to persons awake, and in the full possession of their best faculties[g]?

And then, of those dreams, why are they

[f] Utrum tandem, per deos atque homines, magis verisimile est, *vesanum remigem*, aut aliquem nostrûm, qui ibi tum eramus, *me*, *Catonem*, *Varronem*, *Coponium* ipsum, concilia deorum immortalium perspicere potuisse? *Cic. Div.* l. ii. c. 55.

[g] Illud etiam requiro, cur, si deus ista visa nobis providendi causâ dat, non *vigilantibus* potius dat quàm *dormientibus*? l. ii. c. 61.

SERMON I. sometimes sent to one man, and the interpretation of them reserved for another[h]?

Why—But I have done with these frivolous interrogatories; which, though pressed with all the advantage of Cicero's rhetoric, have really no force against *Pagan divination;* and therefore surely none, against *Scriptural prophecy;* I mean, in the opinion of those who respect it least.

In truth, they who put these questions (arguing, as they must do, on the supposition that prophecy is divinely inspired) cannot excuse their presumption, even to themselves: and they, to whom such questions are proposed, will not, if they be wise, so much as attempt to resolve them. For they have the nature of arguments addressed not only to the *ignorance,* as we say, of the disputant, but to an ignorance clearly *invincible* by all the powers of human reason. Now to arguments of this sort—*I know not*[i]—is the answer of good sense, as well as of modesty, and, to a just reasoner, more satisfactory by far, than

[h] Jam verò quid opus est *circuitione et amfractu,* ut sit sit utendum interpretibus somniorum, potiùs quàm *directo? Ibid.*

[i] Οὐκ οἶδ'. ἐφ' οἷς γὰρ μὴ φρονῶ, σιλῶν φιλῶ.

Soph. Oedip. Tyran. ver. 577.

any solution whatever of the difficulty proposed [k]. SERMON I.

Not that reason is to be wholly silenced on the argument of prophecy: for then every species of imposture would be ready to flow in upon us. The *use*, we should make both of that faculty, and of these preliminary considerations on the *subject*, the *end*, and the *dispensation* of prophecy is, briefly, this, To inquire, whether *any* prophecies have been given —in what sense they are reasonably to be interpreted—and how far, and whether in any proper sense, they have been fulfilled: to examine them, in a word, by their own claims, and on the footing of their own pretensions; that is, to argue on the supposition that they *may* be divine, till they can be evidently shewn to be otherwise.

This is clearly to act suitably to our own faculties; to keep within the sphere of our duty;

[k] Quod est enim criminis genus, aut rei esse alicujus ignarum, aut ipsum, quod nescias, sine aliquâ profiteri dissimulatione nescire? aut uter magis videtur irrisione esse dignissimus vobis, qui sibi scientiam nullam tenebrosæ rei alicujus assumit, an ille, qui retur se ex se apertissimè scire id, quod humanam transiliat notionem, et quod sit cæcis obscuritatibus involutum?

Arnobius, adv. Gen. l. ii.

SERMON I. and to reap the proper benefit, whatever it be, of a sober inquiry into the authority, and character, and accomplishment of the prophetic scriptures.

All the rest is idle cavil, and miserable presumption; equally repugnant to the clearest dictates of right reason, and to that respect which every serious man will think due to the subject, and to himself.

SERMON II.

THE TRUE IDEA OF PROPHECY.

REV. xix. 10.

The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy.

IT is very clear in what manner common sense instructs us to prosecute all inquiries into the divine conduct. Wise men *collect*, from what they see done in the system of nature, so far as they are able to collect it, the intention of its author. They will conclude, in like manner, from what they find delivered in the system of revelation, what the views and purposes of the revealer were.

Prophecy, which makes so considerable a part of that system, must, therefore, be its

SERMON II.

own interpreter. My meaning is, that, setting aside all presumptuous imaginations of our own, we are to take our ideas of what prophecy *should* be, from what, in fact, we find it to have been. If it be true (as the Apostle says, and as the thing itself speaks) that *the things of God knoweth no man but the spirit of God*[a], there cannot possibly be any way of acquiring right notions of prophecy, but by attending to what the spirit of prophecy hath revealed of itself. They, who admit the divine original of those scriptures, which attest the reality, and alone, as they suppose, contain the records, of this extraordinary dispensation, are more than absurd, are impious, if they desert this principle. And they, who reject or controvert their claim to such original, cannot, on any other principle, argue pertinently against that dispensation.

In short, believers and unbelievers, whether they would support, or overturn, the system of prophecy, must be equally governed by the representation given of it in scripture. The *former* must not presume, on any other grounds, to assert the wisdom and fitness of that system: and the *latter* will then take a

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 11.

reasonable method of discrediting, if by such means they can discredit, the pretensions of it. For, as to vindicate prophecy on any principles but its own, can do it no honour; so, to oppose it on any other, can neither prejudice the cause itself, nor serve any reasonable end of the opposer.

To scripture then we must go for all the information we would have concerning the *use* and *intent* of prophecy: and the text, to look no farther, will clearly reveal this great secret to us.

But, before we proceed to reason from the text, in which, as it is pretended, this discovery is made, it will be necessary to explain its true meaning.

St. John, in this chapter of the Revelations, from which the text is taken, had been shewn the downfall of Babylon, and the consequent exaltation of the church, in its closest union with Christ, prefigured under the Jewish idea of a *marriage*. To so delightful a vision, the Angel, in whose presence, and by whose ministry, this scene of glory had been disclosed, subjoins this triumphant admonition—*Write*, says he; *Blessed are they which are called to*

SERMON II. *the marriage of the Lamb. These are the true sayings of God.*

The Apostle, struck with this emphatic address, and contemplating with grateful admiration so joyful a state of things, and the divinity of that fore-sight by which it was predicted, *falls down at the angel's feet to worship him. But he said unto me, See, thou do it not; I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

The sense is plainly this: Direct thy acknowledgment for this important discovery, and that religious adoration, which it inspires, to God only who revealed it, and not to *me*, who am but thy fellow-servant in this office of bearing testimony to Jesus: I said *in bearing testimony to Jesus;* for know, that *the spirit of prophecy*, with which I am endowed, and by which I am enabled to foretell these great things, is but, in other words, *the testimony of Jesus;* it has no other use or end, but to do honour to him; the prophet, whether he be angel or man, is only the minister of God to bear witness to his Son; and his commission is ultimately directed to this one purpose of

manifesting the glories of his kingdom. In discharging this prophetic office, which thou admirest so much, I am then but the witness of Jesus, and so to be considered by thee in no other light than that of thy fellow-servant.

It is evident from the expression, that the text was intended to give some *special* instruction to the Apostle, whose misguided worship afforded the occasion of it. For, if the design had merely been to enforce the general conclusion—*worship God*—the premises need only have been—*I am the servant of God, as well as thou*—for from these premises it had followed, that therefore God, and not the Angel, was to be worshiped. But the premises are not simply, *I am thy fellow-servant*, but *I am the fellow-servant of those who have the testimony of Jesus:* which clause indeed infers the same conclusion, as the former; but, as not being necessary to infer it (for the conclusion had been just and complete without it) was clearly added to convey a precise idea of prophecy itself, as being wholly subservient to Christ, and having no other use or destination, under its various forms and in all the diversities of its administration, but to bear testimony to him. Therefore the Angel says emphatically, in explanation of that latter

SERMON II.

clause, — *For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy* — or, as the sentence, in our translation, should have run [b], the order of its parts being inverted, *For the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.*

It may not be pretended that no more was meant by the text, than that *the particular* prophecy, here delivered, was in attestation of Jesus: for then it would have been expressed with that limitation. The terms, on the other hand, are absolute and indefinite — *the spirit of prophecy* — whence we cannot but conclude that prophecy, in general, is the subject of the proposition.

We have here, then, a remarkable piece of intelligence conveyed to us (incidentally indeed conveyed, but not therefore the less remarkable) concerning the nature and genius of prophecy. The text is properly a key put into our hands, to open to us the mysteries of that dispensation; which had in view ultimately the person of Christ and the various revolutions of his kingdom — *The spirit of prophecy is,* universally, *the testimony of Jesus* [c].

[b] St. Matthew, vi. 22.

[c] Μαρτυρία τῦ Ἰησῦ — *the testimony of, or concerning Jesus,* not — *the testimony given by Jesus.*

The expression, as I have shewn, is so precise as to leave no reasonable doubt of its meaning. Yet it may further serve to justify

The *former* appears to be the sense, for the following reasons.

1. The point asserted, is, "That the Angel, who had delivered this illustrious prophecy, was *the fellow-servant of John*, and not of John only, but *of those who have the testimony of Jesus*" The proof is—*for the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus*—i. e. the end of prophecy is to bear testimony, or, to do honour, to Jesus; therefore, I, says the Angel, who am endowed with this prophetic spirit, am but employed, as thou art; who, in thy character of Apostle or Evangelist, hast received the same general commission, namely, to bear testimony, or to do honour, to Jesus. See Acts x. 42. We are, therefore, *fellow-servants*, or joint labourers in the same cause. All this is clear and well-reasoned. But, now, take the words—*the testimony of Jesus*—in the sense of—*the testimony given by Jesus*—and how does the Angel's having *the spirit of prophecy*, prove him to be *a fellow-servant of John?* for the reason assigned will then stand thus—*for the spirit of prophecy is the testimony which Jesus gives of himself.* The inference is, that the Angel was a true prophet. Again: how is the Angel proved, in this way, to be *the fellow-servant of those who have the testimony of Jesus?* Why, thus; the Angel had the spirit of prophecy, and prophecy was the gift of Christ; therefore he was the fellow-servant of those, who had the same gift, i. e. who were prophets. Without doubt. But why so strange a way of proving so plain a point? It had been enough to say—*I am a prophet, as others are.* Still, what was this to St. John? who, in this place, is not sustaining the cha-

SERMON II.

this interpretation, if we reflect, how exactly it agrees with all that the Jewish prophets were understood to intend, and what Jesus

racter of a prophet; for the worship he was inclined to pay the Angel was on account of the Angel's being, what himself was not, *a prophet.*

Turn it which way you will, the reasoning is frivolous, or inconsequent. I conclude therefore, that not *this,* but the *other* interpretation gives the true sense of — *the testimony of Jesus.*

2. To speak of *prophecy* under the idea of *a testimony to, or concerning Jesus,* is conforming to the true scriptural idea of that gift. Thus we are told that — *to him* [i. e. to Jesus] *give all the prophets witness* — τούτῳ πάντες προφῆται μαρτυροῦσιν, Acts x. 43. *Prophecy,* therefore, being the thing here spoken of, is rightly called the testimony, or witness to, or concerning Jesus.

3. Lastly, the construction is fully justified, 1. by observing that the genitive case [as here Ἰησοῦ] is frequently used in scripture, not actively, but passively. See a variety of instances in Mede, p. 626, where he explains διδασκαλίαι δαιμονίων: And 2. by referring the reader to the following passage of St. Paul, where the very expression of the text is so used — μὴ οὖν ἐπαισχυνθῇς τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν — clearly, *be not ashamed of bearing testimony to our Lord,* 2 Tim. i. 8. — and to Rev. i. 9. where the Apostle tells us, he was in the isle of Patmos — διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ — *on account of his having been faithful in preaching the word of God, and in bearing testimony to Jesus Christ* — and still more plainly, if possible, and indubitably, by referring him to Rev. xii. 17. where, speaking of the Dragon, he says, he went in wrath to make war on those, *which keep the commandments*

himself and his apostles assert was intended, by their predictions. SERMON II.

It were endless to enumerate all the prophecies of the Old Testament, which have been supposed to point at Jesus: and the controversy concerning the application of *some* prophecies to him may be thought difficult. But it is very certain that the Jews, before the coming of Christ, gave this construction to their scriptures: they even looked beyond the letter of their sacred books, and conceived *the testimony* of the Messiah to be the soul and end of the commandment. *The spirit of prophecy* was so firmly believed to intend that *testimony*, that the expectation was general of some such person, as Jesus, to appear among them, and at the very time in which he made

of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ — τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ: for these objects of the Dragon's fury are properly, THE WITNESSES, those faithful servants of truth, who suffered for the courageous and persevering *testimony*, they gave, in evil times, to Jesus Christ, and to his pure religion.

On the whole, there cannot be the least doubt of the interpretation here given of this famous text. The *expression* fairly admits this interpretation; and (what the true critic will regard most) the *scope* of the place, or pertinence of the reasoning, addressed to St. John, admits no other.

SERMON II.

his appearance. This, I say, is an undoubted *fact*, what account soever may be given of it; and so far evinces that the *principle*, delivered in the text, corresponds entirely to the idea which the fathers entertained of the prophetic spirit.

Next, Jesus himself appeals to the *spirit of prophecy*, as bearing witness to his person and dispensation. *Search the Scriptures*, says he to the Jews, *for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of* ME[d]. Two things are observable in these words. 1. If the Jews thought they had *eternal life* in their scriptures, they must needs have understood them in a spiritual sense; for the *letter* of them taught no such thing: and I know not what *other* spiritual sense, that should lead them to the expectation of *eternal life*, they could put on their scriptures, but that prophetic, or typical sense, which respected the Messiah. 2. Jesus here expressly asserts, that their scriptures *testified of him*. How generally they did so, he explained at large in that remarkable conversation with two of his disciples, after his resurrection, when, *beginning at Moses and* ALL *the prophets, he expounded*

[d] John v. 39.

unto them in ALL *the scriptures the things concerning himself*[e].

The *Apostles* of Jesus are frequent and large in the same appeal to the spirit of prophecy. *Those things*, says St. Peter to the Jews, *which God had shewed by the mouth of* ALL *his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled*[f]. And, again, after quoting the authority of Moses, *Yea, and* ALL *the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days*[g].

St. Paul seems to have composed some entire epistles[h], with a view of shewing that Christ was prefigured in the Law itself, and that He was, in truth, the substance of the whole Jewish dispensation. So thoroughly, according to him, did *the spirit of prophecy* pervade that system, and so clearly did it bear testimony to Jesus! Whence, in his apology before Agrippa, we find him asserting of the whole Christian doctrine, *that he said none*

[e] Luke xxiv. 27. [f] Acts iii. 18.

[g] Acts iii. 24. See also Acts x. 43. 1 Pet. i. 10.

[h] See especially the Epistles to the *Hebrews*, and *Galatians*.

SERMON II.

other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come[i].

More citations cannot be necessary on so plain a point. And I bring these to shew, not the truth of the principle itself (which is not now under consideration) but the certainty of the interpretation, here given to the text. For I make it say no more (though it says it indeed more precisely) than the scriptures themselves were *understood* by the Jews to say, and are represented by Jesus and his Apostles, as *actually* saying, when I affirm its sense to be, "That the scope and end of prophecy was the testimony of Jesus."

On this principle, then, we are to regulate all our reasonings on the subject of prophecy. They who maintain, and they who would confute, its pretensions, must equally go on this supposition. If the system of prophecy can be justified, or so far as it can be justified, on these grounds, the defence must be thought solid and satisfactory; because those grounds are not arbitrarily assumed, but are such as that system itself acknowledges. On the con-

[i] Acts xxvi. 22. See farther, Acts xxviii. 23. Rom. iii. 21. Eph. ii. 19, &c.

trary, whatever advantage may be fairly taken of those grounds to discredit prophecy, must needs be allowed, for the same reason.

Again: On the believer's scheme, that prophecy is of divine inspiration, there can be no *presumption* in arguing from the grounds, here supposed, in favour of prophecy. Because, though all conclusions from a principle of human invention, must be hazardous and rash, yet from a principle of divine authority, many sober and just inferences may be drawn. For it is one thing, to discover a principle, and another, to argue justly and cogently from it.

On the other hand, the unbeliever, who regards the whole system of prophecy as of human invention, must yet be allowed to argue pertinently from the same grounds, because they are the proper grounds of that system: his arguments may be rightly formed, though the principle, from which he argues, appear to him of no authority. The rules of logic will indeed oblige him to argue on that principle; for, otherwise, he combats, not his adversary's position, but a phantom of his own raising.

SERMON II.

Having premised thus much concerning the right interpretation of the text, and the important relation it bears to the present subject, I should now proceed to inquire what conclusions naturally and fairly result from it. For from this assumption, that *Jesus is the end of prophecy*, it will, I think, follow very evidently, that the greater part of those objections which make so much noise, and are so confidently urged, on the subject of prophecy, have no force at all in them.

But, before we enter on that task, it may be useful to consider more particularly what the ASSUMED PRINCIPLE itself is, and to pause a while in contemplation of this idea.

The text, as here interpreted, and in full consonance with the tenor of the sacred writings, implies this fact—that *Prophecy* in general (that is, all the prophecies of the Old and New Testament) hath its ultimate accomplishment in the history and dispensation of Jesus.

But now, if we look into those writings, we find, 1. That prophecy is of a prodigious extent; that it commenced from the fall of man, and reaches to the consummation of all

things: that, for many ages, it was delivered darkly, to few persons, and with large intervals from the date of one prophecy to that of another; but, at length, became more clear, more frequent, and was uniformly carried on in the line of one people, separated from the rest of the world, among other reasons assigned, for this principally, to be the repository of the divine oracles: that, with some intermission, the spirit of prophecy subsisted among that people, to the coming of Christ: that He himself and his Apostles exercised this power in the most conspicuous manner; and left behind them many predictions, recorded in the books of the New Testament, which profess to respect very distant events, and even run out to the end of time, or, in St. John's expression, to that period, *when the mystery of God shall be perfected* [k].

2. Further, besides the extent of this prophetic scheme, the dignity of the *Person*, whom it concerns, deserves our consideration. He is described in terms, which excite the most august and magnificent ideas. He is spoken of, indeed, sometimes as being *the seed of the woman*, and as *the son of man*; yet so as being at the same time of more than mortal

[k] Rev. x. 7.

SERMON II.

extraction. He is even represented to us, as being superior to men and angels; as far above all principality and power, above all that is accounted great, whether in heaven or in earth; as the word and wisdom of God; as the eternal Son of the Father; as the heir of all things, by whom he made the worlds; as the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.

We have no words to denote greater ideas, than these: the mind of man cannot elevate itself to nobler conceptions. Of such transcendent worth and excellence is that Jesus said to be, to whom all the prophets bear witness!

3. Lastly, the declared *purpose*, for which the Messiah, prefigured by so long a train of prophecy, came into the world, corresponds to all the rest of the representation. It was not to deliver an oppressed nation from civil tyranny, or to erect a great civil empire, that is, to atchieve one of those acts, which history accounts most heroic. No: it was not a mighty state, a *victor people*—

"*Non res Romanæ perituraque regna*—"

that was worthy to enter into the contemplation of this divine person. It was another and

far sublimer purpose, which HE came to accomplish; a purpose, in comparison of which, all our policies are poor and little, and all the performances of man as nothing. It was to deliver a world from ruin; to abolish sin and death; to purify and immortalize human nature; and thus, in the most exalted sense of the words, to be the Saviour of all men, and the blessing of all nations.

There is no exaggeration in this account. I deliver the undoubted sense, if not always the very words of scripture.

Consider then to what this representation amounts. Let us unite the several parts of it, and bring them to a point. A spirit of prophecy pervading all time—characterizing one person, of the highest dignity—and proclaiming the accomplishment of one purpose, the most beneficent, the most divine, that imagination itself can project—Such is the scriptural delineation, whether we will receive it or no, of that œconomy, which we call Prophetic!

And now then (if we must be reasoning from our ideas of *fit and right*, to the rectitude of the divine conduct) let me ask, in one word,

SERMON II.

whether, on the supposition that it should ever please the moral Governor of the world to reveal himself by prophecy at all, we can conceive him to do it, in a *manner*, or for *ends*, more worthy of him? Does not the *extent* of the scheme correspond to our best ideas of that infinite Being, to whom all duration is but a point, and to whose view all time is equally present? Is not the *object* of this scheme, the Lamb of God that was slain from the foundation of the world, worthy, in our conceptions, of all the honour that can be reflected upon him by so vast and splendid an œconomy? Is not the *end* of this scheme such as we should think most fit for such a scheme of prophecy to predict, and for so divine a person to accomplish?

You see, every thing here is of a piece: all the parts of this dispensation are astonishingly great, and perfectly harmonize with each other.

We, who admit the divinity of those records, which represent to us this state of things, cannot but be infinitely affected with it: since, in that case, we only contemplate an undoubted fact, in this representation. And it should further seem that even those, who question that authority of scripture, must, if they be

ingenuous, confess themselves *struck* by a representation at once so sublime and consistent. They require, on all occasions, to have reasons of what they call *fitness*, in the divine conduct, pointed out to them: Can they overlook them here, where they are so obvious and so convincing? At least, the credibility of such a scheme, as that of prophecy is in Scripture represented to be, appears not, so far as we have hitherto considered it, to be opposed or lessened in any degree by our *natural* prejudices; by the best notions, I mean, which we can frame on this subject; but is, indeed, much *strengthened* and confirmed by them.

On the idea of such a scheme, as is here presented to us, I enlarge no farther, at present, than just to make ONE general observation. It is this: That the argument from prophecy is not to be formed from the consideration of single prophecies, but from all the prophecies taken together, and considered as making one system; in which, from the mutual dependance and connection of its parts, preceding prophecies prepare and illustrate those which follow, and these, again, reflect light on the foregoing: just as, in any philosophical system, that which shews the solidity of it, is

SERMON II.

the harmony and correspondence of the whole, not the application of it, in particular instances.

Hence, though the evidence be but small, from the completion of any one prophecy, taken separately, yet, that evidence being always something, the amount of the whole evidence, resulting from a great number of prophecies, all relative to the same design, may be considerable; like many scattered rays, which, though each be weak in itself, yet, concentred into one point, shall form a strong light, and strike the sense very powerfully. Still more: this evidence is not simply a growing evidence, but is indeed multiplied upon us, from the number of reflected lights, which the several component parts of such a system reciprocally throw upon each: till, at length, the conviction rise into a high degree of moral certainty.

It hath been said indeed, of this scheme, or way of considering prophecy, *that it is an imaginary scheme, of which there is not the least trace in any of the four Gospels; and that it even contradicts the whole evidence of*

prophecy, as it was understood and applied by the Apostles and evangelists[1].

But what, is there no trace of this scheme in the Gospel, when Jesus himself *began at Moses and the prophets, and expounded* [to his disciples] *in* ALL *the scriptures the things concerning himself?* Is this scheme contradictory to the evidence of prophecy, as understood by the Apostles, when St. Peter argued with the Jews *from what God had spoken by the mouth of* ALL *his prophets, since the world began?*

Is not here a series of prophecies, expressly referred to, as running up not only to the times of Moses[m], but to the beginning of the world? And is not this series argued from, as constituting one entire system of prophecy, and as affording an evidence distinct from that which arises from the consideration of each prophecy, taken singly and by itself?

[1] DR. MIDDLETON'S *Works*, vol. III. p. 137. London, 1752, 4to.

[m] Though by *Moses*, is here meant, not the prophecies of Moses only, but the *books* of Moses, containing those former prophecies, which, as St. Peter says, had been delivered, *since the world began.*

SERMON II.

But Jesus and his Apostles, usually, *applied the prophecies singly and independently on each other, as so many different arguments for the general truth of the Gospel*[n].

Could they do *otherwise*, when the occasions offered, in the course of their ministry, to which those prophecies were to be applied? Or, could they do *better*, in their discourses to the people, to whom the argument from single prophecies would be more familiar, than that complicated one, arising from a whole system? Does it follow, because the prophecies were applied singly, that therefore they might not with good reason be applied systematically; or that they may not now be so applied, when we have to do with those, who are capable of entering into this sort of argumentation? Will it be said that, because the moral precepts of the Gospel are delivered singly, there is therefore no such thing as a system of morality, or that the subject may not be treated with propriety, and with advantage too, in that form?

On the whole, the prophecies of the Old and New Testament, having clearly all the *qualities* of what we call a system, that is, con-

[n] DR. MIDDLETON, p. 139.

sisting of many particulars, dependent on each other, and intimately connected by their reference to a common end, there is no reason why they may not be considered in this light; and there is great reason why they should be so considered, since otherwise, on many occasions, we shall not do justice to the argument itself.

To return then to the text (which implies the existence and use of such a system) and to conclude with it. *The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.* This angelic information presents, at first sight, an idea stupendous indeed, but, on such a subject, suitable enough to our expectations. It offers no violence to the natural sense of the human mind; but, on the contrary, hath every thing in it to engage our belief and veneration.

Such is the *idea* of Prophecy, contemplated in itself. What *conclusions* (of importance, as we suppose, to the right apprehension and further vindication of prophecy) may be drawn from that idea, will be next considered.

SERMON III.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE TRUE IDEA OF PROPHECY.

REV. xix. 10.

The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy.

SERMON III.

WE have seen how precarious all our reasonings on divine prophecy must be, when built on no better grounds than those of human fancy and conjecture. The text supplies us with a principle, as *we* believe, of divine authority; as *all* must confess, of scriptural authority; that is, of the same authority as that on which prophecy itself stands.

This principle has been explained at large. It affirms that *Jesus*, whose person and cha-

racter and history are sufficiently known from the books of scripture, *is the end and object of the prophetic system*, contained in those books. SERMON III.

We are now at liberty to reason from this principle. Whatever conclusions are fairly drawn from it, must to the believer appear, as certain truths; must to the unbeliever appear, as very proper illustrations of that principle.

In general, if difficulties can be removed by pursuing and applying scriptural principles, they are fairly removed: and the removal of every such difficulty, on these grounds, must be a presumption in favour of that system, whether we call it of *Prophecy*, or *Revelation*, which is thus found to carry its own vindication with it.

From the principle of the text may, I think, be deduced, among others, the following conclusions; all of them tending to clear the subject of prophecy, and to obviate some or other of those objections, which prejudiced or hasty reasoners have been disposed to make to it.

I. My first conclusion is, "That, on the idea of such a scheme of prophecy, as the text supposes, a considerable degree of obscurity

SERMON III.

may be reasonably expected to attend the *delivery* of the divine predictions."

There are general reasons which shew that prophecy, as such, will most probably be thus delivered. For instance, it has been observed, that, as the completion of prophecy is left, for the most part, to the instrumentality of free agents, if the circumstances of the event were predicted with the utmost precision, either human liberty must be restrained; or human obstinacy *might* be tempted to form, the absurd indeed, but criminal purpose, of counteracting the prediction. On the contrary, by throwing some part of the predicted event into shade, the moral faculties of the agent have their proper play, and the guilt of an intended opposition to the will of heaven is avoided. This reason seems to have its weight: and many others might still be mentioned. But I argue, at present, from the *particular* principle, under consideration.

An immense scheme of prophecy was ultimately designed to bear testimony to the person and fortunes of Jesus. But Jesus was not himself to come, till what is called the *last age* of the world, nor all the purposes of his com-

ing to be fully accomplished, till the *end* of that age.

Now, whatever reasons might make it fit, in the view of infinite wisdom, to defer the execution of this scheme to so distant a period, may probably be conceived to make it fit, that the *delivery* of it should be proportionably dark and obscure. A certain degree of light, we will say, was to be communicated from the date of the prophecy: but it is very conceivable that the ages nearer the completion of it, might be more immediately concerned in the event predicted; and that, till such time approached, it might be convenient to leave the prediction in a good degree of obscurity.

The fact answers to this presumption. Prophecies of very remote events, remote, I mean, from the date of the prediction, are universally the most obscure. As the season advanced for their accomplishment, they are rendered more clear: either fresh prophecies are given, to point out the time, and other circumstances, more determinately; or the completion of some prophecies affords new light for the interpretation of others, that are unfulfilled. Yet neither are we to conceive that those *fresh prophecies*, or this *new light* removes all obscu-

SERMON III.

rity: enough is still left to prevent or disappoint the efforts of presumption; and only so much additional clearness is bestowed on the prophecy, as the revealer saw fit to indulge to those who lived nearer the time of its completion.

But this is not all: By looking into that plan of providence, which respects Jesus, and the ends to be accomplished by him, as it is drawn out in the sacred writings, we find a *distinct* reason for the obscurity of the prophecies, relative to that subject.

We there find it to have been in the order of the divine councils, that, between the first dawnings of revelation and the fuller light of the Gospel, an intermediate and very singular œconomy, yet still preparatory to that of Jesus, should be instituted. This œconomy (for reasons, which it is not to our present purpose to deduce, and for some, no doubt, which we should in vain attempt to discover) was to continue for many ages, and *while* it continued, was to be had in honour among that people, for whom it was more immediately designed. But now the genius of those two dispensations, the Jewish, I mean, and the Christian, being wholly different; the one, carnal, and enforced by temporal sanctions only, the other, spiritual, and established

on better promises, the prophets, who lived under the former of these dispensations (and the greater part of those, who prophesied of Jesus, lived under it) were of course so to predict the future œconomy, as not to disgrace the present. They were to respect the *Law*, even while they announced the *Gospel*, which was, in due time, to supersede it[a].

So much, we will say, was to be discovered as might erect the thoughts of men towards some better scheme of things, hereafter to be introduced; certainly so much, as might sufficiently evince the divine intention in that scheme, when it should actually take place; but not enough to indispose them towards that state of discipline, under the yoke of which they were then held. From this double purpose, would clearly result that character, in the prophecies concerning the new dispensation, which we find impressed upon them; and which St. Peter well describes, when he speaks of them, as dispensing a light indeed, but *a light shining in a dark place.*

Upon the whole, the delivery of prophecy seems well suited to that dispensation which it

[a] D. L. Vol. V. p. 288. Lond. 1765.

SERMON III.

was given to attest. If the object in view had been one single event, to be accomplished all at once, it might perhaps be expected that the prophecies concerning it would have been clear and precise. But, if the scheme of Christianity be what the scriptures represent it to be, a scheme, commencing from the foundation of the world, and unfolding itself by just degrees through a long succession of ages, and to be fully accomplished only at the consummation of all things, *prophecy*, which was given to attend on that scheme, and to furnish a suitable attestation to it, must needs be supposed to adapt itself to the nature of the dispensation; that is, to have different degrees of clearness or obscurity according to its place in the general system; and not to disclose more of it, or in clearer terms, at any one period, than might consist with the various ends of wisdom which were to be served by the gradual opening of so vast and intricate a scene.

ANOTHER circumstance, of affinity with this, is apt to strike us, in the contemplation of the scriptural prophecies. There is reason to believe that more than one sense was purposely inclosed in some of them; and we find, in fact, that the writers of the New Testament give to many of the old prophecies an inter-

pretation very different and remote from that which may be reasonably thought the primary and immediate view of the prophets themselves. This is what Divines call the DOUBLE SENSE of prophecy: by which they mean an accomplishment of it in more events than one; in the same system indeed; but at distant intervals, and under different parts of that system.

Now, as suspicious as this circumstance may appear at first sight, it will be found, on inquiry, to be exactly suited to that idea of prophecy which the text gives us of it, as being, from the first, and all along, intended to *bear Testimony to Jesus.* For from that idea I conclude again,

II. "That prophecies of a *double sense* may well be expected in such a scheme."

And where is the wonder that, if prophecy was given to attest the coming of Jesus and the dispensation to be erected by him, it should occasionally, in every stage of it, respect its main purpose; and, though the immediate object be some other, it should never lose sight of that, in which it was ultimately to find its repose and end?

SERMON III.

It hath been before observed, That, between the earlier notices concerning Jesus, and the advent of that great person, it seemed good to infinite wisdom (I speak in terms, suited to the representation of scripture) to institute the intermediate œconomy of the Jewish Law. Among other provisions for the administration of this Law, *prophecy* was one; and, upon its own pretensions, a necessary one; for the government claims to be strictly *theocratical;* and the people, to be governed by it, were to be made sensible, at every step, that it was so. Therefore the interesting events in their civil history were to be regarded by them, as coming within the cognisance, and lying under the controul, of their divine governour: to which end, a race of men were successively raised up among them, to give them warning of those events, and, by this divine foresight of what was seen to be accomplished in their history, to afford a clear conviction, that they were, in fact, under that peculiar government.

Add to this, that the *Law* itself, so wonderfully constructed, was but a part, indeed the rudiments, of one great scheme; was given, not for its own sake, but to make way for a still nobler and more generous institution; was, in truth, a preparatory state of discipline, or

pædagogy, as St. Paul terms it, to bring the subjects of it, in due time, to *Christ* [b]. SERMON III.

Jesus then, the object of the earliest prophecies, was not overlooked in this following dispensation; which was, indeed, instinct with presages of that divine person. *It gave the shadow of good things to come, but the body was of Christ* [c]. The *legal* prophets, in like

[b] Gal. iii. 24.—ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν —

[c] Coloss. ii. 17. Hence, St. Austin affirms roundly, "That, to such as consider the genius of the revealed sys-"tem, the Old Testament must appear a continued pro-"phecy of the New." — *Vetus Testamentum*, recte *sentientibus*, PROPHETIA *est Novi Testamenti* [*contr. Faustum*, l. xv.]: and St. Jerom speaks of it as a generally-received maxim, "That it is the manner of sacred scripture, to "deliver, beforehand, the truth of futurity, in types"— *hunc esse morem scripturæ sanctæ ut futurorum veritatem præmittat*, in TYPIS [Hieron. T. III. 1127.] — I know, that the ancient Fathers, and from them many moderns, have exposed themselves to much and deserved censure, by pursuing this principle too minutely and superstitiously, in their mystical and allegorical comments on the Jewish scriptures. But men of sense will consider, that a principle is not therefore to be rejected, because it has been abused. For instance, that the Passover was instituted with a reference to the sacrifice of Christ, that the paschal Lamb was, in the language of St. Austin, a *prophecy*, or, in that of St. Jerom, a *type*, of the lamb of God, will seem highly credible to one who considers the aptness of the correspondence in two related parts of the same system:

SERMON III.

manner, while they were immediately employed, and perhaps believed themselves to be solely employed, in predicting the occurrences of the Jewish state, were at the same time, preluding, as it were, to the person and dispensation of Jesus; the holy Spirit, which inspired them, bearing out their expression, and enlarging their conceptions, beyond the worth and size of those objects, which came directly in their view.

There is nothing in this account of *prophecy*, but what falls in with our best ideas of the di-

But, that the famous Law in Deuteronomy, concerning the marriage of a brother's widow, was *prophetic*, or *typical* of the duty, incumbent on the ministers of the Gospel, to espouse the widowed church of Christ, is certainly much less clear, and will scarcely be admitted even on the authority of St. Austin.—Hoc ipsum—quod uxorem fratris ad hoc frater jussus est ducere, ut non sibi, sed illi sobolem suscitaret, ejusque vocaret nomine, quod inde nasceretur: quid aliud *in figurâ præmonstrat*, nisi quia unusquisque Evangelii prædicator ita debet in Ecclesiâ laborare, ut defuncto fratri, hoc est Christo, suscitet semen, qui pro nobis mortuus est, et quod suscitatum fuerit, ejus nomen accipiat? *Contr. Faustum*, l. 32.—St. Austin might, perhaps, say for himself, that he had an example of this practice in the mystical comments of St. Paul: it may be so: but an *example*, followed without warrant, in this instance, by the learned Father, and, not improbably, ill understood by him.

vine wisdom; intently prosecuting one entire scheme; and directing the constituent parts of it to the general purpose of his providence, at the same time that *each* serves to accomplish its own.

This *double*, or *secondary sense* of prophecy was so far from giving offence to Lord Bacon, that he speaks of it with admiration, as one striking argument of its Divinity. *In sorting the prophecies of scripture with their events* (a work much desired by this wise author, and intended by this Lecture) *we must allow*, says he, *for that latitude which is agreeable and familiar unto divine prophecies, being of the nature of the author, with whom a thousand years are but as one day; and therefore they are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishment throughout many ages, though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age*[d].

But, that we may not mistake, or pervert, this fine observation of our great philosopher, it may be proper to take notice, that the reason of it holds in such prophecies only as re-

[d] Adv. of Learning, B. II.

SERMON III.

spect the several successive parts of one system; which, being intimately connected together, may be supposed to come within the view and contemplation of the same prophecy: whereas it would be endless, and one sees not on what grounds of reason we are authorized, to look out for the accomplishment of prophecy in any casual unrelated events of general history. The Scripture speaks of prophecy, as respecting Jesus, that is, as being one connected scheme of Providence, of which the Jewish dispensation makes a part: so that here we are led to expect that *springing and germinant accomplishment,* which is mentioned. But had the Jewish Law been complete in itself, and totally unrelated to the Christian, the general principle—*that a thousand years are with God but as one day*—would no more justify us in extending a Jewish prophecy to Christian events, because perhaps it was eminently fulfilled in them, than it would justify us in extending it to any other signally corresponding events whatsoever. It is only when the prophet hath one uniform connected design before him, that we are authorised to use this latitude of interpretation. For then the prophetic spirit naturally runs along the several parts of *such* design, and unites the remotest events with the nearest: the style of the prophet, in the mean

time, so adapting itself to this double prospect, as to paint the near and subordinate event in terms that *emphatically* represent the distant and more considerable.

So that, with this explanation, nothing can be more just or philosophical, than the idea which Lord Bacon suggests of divine prophecy.

The great scheme of Redemption, we are now considering, being the only scheme in the plan of Providence, which, as far as we know, hath been prepared and dignified by a continued system of prophecy, at least this being the only scheme to which we have seen a prophetic system applied, men do not so readily apprehend the doctrine of *double senses* in prophecy, as they would do, if they saw it exemplified in other cases. But what the history of mankind does not supply, we may represent to ourselves by many obvious suppositions; which cannot justify, indeed, such a scheme of things, but may facilitate the conception of it.

Suppose, for instance, that it had been the purpose of the Deity (as it unquestionably was) to erect the FREE GOVERNMENT of ancient Rome; and that, from the time of Æneas' landing in Italy, he had given prophetic inti-

SERMON III.

mations of this purpose. Suppose, further, that he had seen fit, for the better discipline of his favoured people, to place them, for a season, under the *yoke* of the Regal government; and that, during that state of things, he had instructed his prophets to foretell the wars and other occurrences which should distinguish that period of their history.—Here would be a case somewhat similar to that of the Jews under their theocratic regimen: not exactly indeed, because prophecy, as we have seen, was essential to the Jewish polity, but had nothing to do with the regal, or any other polity of the Romans. But allow for this difference, and suppose that, for some reason or other, the spirit of prophecy was indulged to this people, under their *kings*, as it was to the Jews, under their *theocracy*; and that it was *primarily* employed in the same way, that is, in predicting their various fortunes under that regimen: Suppose, I say, all this, and would it surprize us to find that their prophets, in dilating on this part of their scheme, should, in a *secondary* sense, predict the future and more splendid part of it? That, having the whole equally presented to their view, they should anticipate the coming glories of their *free* state, even in a prophecy which directly concerned their *regal*, and much humbler

successes? That, in commenting on their petty victories over the Sabins and Latins, they should drop some hints that pointed at their African and Asiatic triumphs; or, in tracing the shadow of freedom they enjoyed under the best of their kings, they should let fall some strokes, that more expressly designed the substantial liberty of their equal republic: the *end*, as we suppose, and completion of that scheme, for the sake of which the prophetic power itself had been communicated to them? Still more: supposing we had such prophecies now in our hands, and that we found them applicable indeed in a general way to the former parts of their history, but frequently more expressive of events in the latter, should we doubt of their being prophecies in a *double sense*, or should we think it strange that two successive and dependent dispensations in the same connected scheme should be, at once, the object of the same predictions? And lastly, to put an end to these questions, could there seem to be equal reason for applying these predictions to such events as might possibly correspond to them in some *other* history, the Græcian, for instance, as for applying them to similar events in the *Roman* history? SERMON III.

Let me just observe further, that, from what hath been said under these two articles,

SERMON III.

we may clearly discern the difference between *Pagan oracles*, and *Scriptural prophecies*. Both have been termed obscure and ambiguous; and an invidious parallel hath been made, or insinuated, between them[e]. The Pagan oracles were indeed *obscure*, sometimes to a degree that no reasonable sense could be made of them: they were also *ambiguous*, in the worst sense; I mean, so as to admit contrary interpretations. The scriptural prophecies we own to be *obscure*, to a certain degree: And we may call them, too, *ambiguous*; because they contained two, consistent, indeed, but different meanings. But here is the distinction, I would point out to you. The obscurity and ambiguity of the Pagan oracles had no necessary, or reasonable cause in the subject, on which they turned: the obscurity and ambiguity of the scriptural prophecies have an evident reason in the system, to which they belong. As the Pagan predictions had near and single events for their object, the fate perhaps of some depending war, or the success of some council, then in agitation, they might have been clearly and precisely delivered; and in fact we find that such of the Jewish predictions as foretold events of that sort and charac-

[e] Dr. Middleton, *Works*, vol. III. p. 177. *London*, 1752, 4to.

ter, were so delivered: But, the scriptural prophecies under consideration respecting one immense scheme of Providence, it might be expedient that the remoter parts should be obscurely revealed; as it was surely natural that the connected parts of such a scheme should be shewn together.

We see then what force there is in that question, which is asked with so much confidence—"*Is it possible, that the same character can be due to the Jewish prophecies, which the wise and virtuous in the heathen world considered as an argument of fraud and falshood in the Pythian prophecies*[f]?"

First, we say, the character is *not* entirely the same in both: and, *secondly*, that, so far as it *is* the same, that character is very becoming in the Jewish, but utterly absurd in the Pythian prophecies. What was owing to fraud or ignorance in the Pagan Diviner, is reasonably ascribed to the depth and height of that wisdom, which informed the Jewish Prophet[g].

To proceed with our subject. It further appears,

[f] DR. MIDDLETON, vol. III. p. 177.

[g] See further on this subject, D. L. vol. V. p. 290.

SERMON III.

III. On the grounds of the text, we now stand upon, "to be very conceiveable and credible that the line of prophecy should run chiefly in one family and people, as we are informed it did, and that the other nations of the earth should be no further the *immediate* objects of it, than as they chanced to be connected with that people."

Prophecy, in the ideas of scripture, was not ultimately given for the private use of this or that nation, nor yet for the nobler and more general purpose of proclaiming the superintending providence of the Deity (an awful truth, which men might collect for themselves from the established constitution of nature) but *simply* to evidence the truth of the Christian revelation. It was *therefore* confined to one nation, purposely set apart to preserve and attest the oracles of God; and to exhibit, in their public records and whole history, the proofs and credentials of an amazing dispensation, which God had decreed to accomplish in Christ Jesus [h].

[h] Quand UN SEUL HOMME auroit fait un livre des prédictions de Jesus Christ pour le tems et pour la maniere, et que Jesus Christ seroit venu conformément à ces propheties, ce seroit une force infinie. Mais il y a bien plus ici. C'est une SUITE D'HOMMES durant quatre mille ans.

This conclusion, I say, seems naturally and fairly drawn from the great principle, that *the spirit of prophecy was the testimony of Jesus*, because the means appear to be well suited and proportioned to the *end*. The *Testimony* thought fit to be given, was not one or two prophecies only, but a *scheme* of prophecy, gradually prepared and continued through a large tract of time. But how could such a scheme be executed, or rather how could it clearly be seen that there was such a scheme in view, if some *one* people had not been made the repository, and, in part, the instrument of the divine counsels, in regard to Jesus; some *one* people, I say, among whom we might trace the several parts of such a scheme, and observe the dependance they had on each other; that so the *idea*, of what we call a scheme, might be duly impressed upon us?

For, had the notices concerning the Redeemer been dispersed indifferently among *all*

qui constamment & sans variation viennent l'un ensuite de l'autre prédire ce même avénement. C'est UN PEUPLE TOUT ENTIER qui l'annonce, et qui subsiste pendant quatre mille années, pour rendre EN CORPS témoignage des assurances qu'ils en ont, & dont ils ne peuvent être detournés par quelques menaces et quelque persecution qu'on leur fasse: CECI EST TOUT AUTREMENT CONSIDERABLE.

Pascal.

SERMON III.

nations, where had been that uncorrupt and unsuspected testimony, that continuity of evidence, that unbroken chain of prediction, all tending, by just degrees, to the same point, which we now contemplate with wonder in the Jewish scriptures?

It is not then that the rest of the world was overlooked [i] in the plan of God's providence, but that he saw fit to employ the ministry of *one* people: This last, I say, and not the other, is the reason why the divine communications concerning Christ were appropriated to the Jews.

Yes, but "some one of the *greater* nations had better been intrusted with that charge." This circumstance, I allow, might have struck a superficial observer more: but could the integrity of the prophetic scheme have been more discernible amidst the multiform and infinitely involved transactions of a mighty people, than in the simpler story of this small Jewish family; or would the hand or work of God, who loves to manifest himself by weak instruments, have been more conspicuous in that designation?

[i] See the passage before referred to in Serm. I. p. 6.

On the whole, I forget not, with what awful diffidence it becomes us to reason on such subjects. But the *fact* being, that *one*, in preference to other nations, had the honour of conveying the prophetic admonitions concerning Jesus, it may be allowable to inquire, with modesty, into the reasons of that appointment, and the *end* of prophecy being clearly assigned in sacred scripture, such reasons will not be hastily rejected, as obviously present themselves to an inquirer from the *consideration* of that end.

The benefits of prophecy, though conveyed by one nation, would finally redound to all; and the more *effectually*, we have seen, for being conveyed by one nation. May we not conclude then (having the *fact*, as I said, to reason upon) that, to obtain such purpose, it was fit to select *a peculiar people?* And, if thus much be acknowledged, it will hardly be thought a question of much moment, though no answer could be given to it, why the *Jews* had that exclusive privilege conferred upon them.

It is true, a great scheme of prophecy was once revealed to a Gentile King[k]; but a King,

[k] Daniel, c. ii.

SERMON III.

connected with the Jews, and who had a Jewish prophet for his interpreter. It is, besides, observable of that prophetic scheme, that it laid open the future fortunes of four great empires; but all of them instruments in the hand of God to carry on his designs, on the Jewish people first, but ultimately, with regard to Jesus. For it hath been remarked with equal truth and penetration, that Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the four kingdoms was designed, as a sort of *prophetic chronology*, to point out, by a series of successive empires, the beginning and end of Christ's spiritual Kingdom. So that the reason, why those four empires only were distinguished by the spirit of prophecy, was, not because they were greater than all others, but simply because the course of their history led, in a regular and direct succession, to the times and reign of Christ[1].

[1] Est autem Quaternio iste regnorum Danielis (quod imprimis observari velim) CHRONOLOGIA QUÆDAM PROPHETICA, non tam annorum quàm regnorum intervallis distincta, ubi regnorum in præcipuâ orbis terrarum parte, simul ecclesiam et populum Dei complexâ, sibi invicem succedentium serie, monstratur tempus quo Christi regnum à tot seculis promissum et primùm inchoandum sit, idemque demum certis temporibus consummandum.

—Ex his, quæ dicta sunt, ratio elucet, quare, ex omnibus mundi regnis, quatuor hæc sola selegit Spiritus sanctus, quorum fata tam insigni ornaret prophetiâ; nempe

We see then, on the principle, *that prophecy was given for the sake of Jesus only*, that no presumption lies against the truth of it, on account of its respecting chiefly one people, how inconsiderable soever in itself, or from its silence in regard to some of the largest and most flourishing kingdoms that have appeared in the world.

IV. Lastly (for I now hasten to an end of this discourse) I infer from the same principle, "That, if, even after a mature consideration of the prophecies, and of the events, in which they are taken to be fulfilled, there should, after all, be some cloud remaining on this subject, which with all our wit or pains we cannot wholly remove, this state of things would afford no objection to prophecy, because it is indeed no other than we might reasonably expect."

quia ex his solis inter omnia mundi regna periodus temporum ejusmodi contexi potuit, qua rectâ serie et ordinatâ successione perduceret ad tempora et momenta regni Christi. Non verò quia nulla istis paria imperia, forsan et aliquibus majora, per omnia secula orbis visurus esset. Nam neque Saracenorum olim, neque hodie Turcarum, neque Tartarorum regna ditionis amplitudine Persico aut Græco, puto nec Assyrio, quicquam concedunt; imò, ni fallor, excedunt.

MEDE's Works, B. III. p. 712. Lond. 1672.

SERMON III.

For, 1. If Jesus be the end of prophecy, the same reasons that made it fit to deliver some predictions darkly, will further account to us for some degree of obscurity in the application of them to their corresponding events.

I say—will *account* to us for such obscurity—for, whatever those *reasons* were, they could not have taken effect, but by the intervention of such *means*, as must darken in some degree, the application of a prophecy, even after the accomplishment of it; unless we say, that an object can be seen as distinctly through a *veil*, as without one. For instance; *figurative language* is the chief of those means, by which it pleased the inspirer to throw a shade on prophecies, unfulfilled; but figurative language, from the nature of it, is not so precise and clear, as *literal expression*, even when the event prefigured has lent its aid to illustrate and explain that language.

If then it was *fit* that some prophecies concerning Jesus should be *delivered* obscurely, it cannot be supposed that such prophecies, when they come to be *applied*, will acquire a full and absolute perspicuity [m].

[m] To this purpose the late learned and ingenious author of the *Discourses on Prophecy*—"A figurative and

2. If the dispensation of Jesus be the main subject of the prophecies, then may some of them be still impenetrable to us, because the various fortunes of that dispensation are not yet perfectly disclosed, and so some of them may not hitherto have been fulfilled. But the completion of a prophecy is that which gives the utmost degree of clearness, of which it is capable.

3. But lastly and chiefly, if the end and use of prophecy be to attest the truth of Christianity, then may we be sure that such attestation will not carry with it the utmost degree of evidence. For Christianity is plainly a state of discipline and probation: calculated to improve our moral nature, by giving scope and exercise to our moral faculties. So that, though the evidence for it be *real* evidence, and on the whole *sufficient* evidence, yet neither can we expect it to be of that sort which should compel our assent. Something must be left to quicken our attention, to excite our industry, and to try the natural ingenuity of the human mind.

dark description of a future event will be figurative and dark still, when the event happens." And again—"No event can make a figurative or metaphorical expression to be a plain or literal one." Bishop Sherlock, *Disc.* II. p. 32 and 36. London, 1749.

SERMON III.

Had the purpose of prophecy been to shew, merely, that a predicted event was foreseen, then the end had been best answered by throwing all possible evidence into the completion. But its concern being to shew this to such only as should be disposed to admit a reasonable degree of evidence, it was not necessary, or rather it was plainly not fit, that the completion should be seen in that strong and irresistible light[n].

For all the reasons, now given, (and doubtless, for many more) it was to be expected, that prophecy would not be one cloudless emanation of light and glory. If it be clear enough to serve the ends, for which it was designed; if through all its obscurities, we be able to trace the hand and intention of its divine author; what more would we have? How improvidently, indeed, do we ask more of that great Being, who, for the sake of the *natural* world, *clothes the heavens with blackness* [Is. l. 3.]; and in equal mercy to the *moral* world, veils his nature and providence *in thick clouds, and makes darkness his pavilion* [Ps. xviii. 11]?

[n] Le dessein de Dieu est plus de perfectionner la volonté, que l'esprit. Or, la clarté parfaite ne serviroit qu'à l'esprit, & nuiroit à la volonté. Pascal.

To THESE deductions from the text, more might be added. For I believe it will be found that if the *end* of prophecy, as here delivered, be steddily kept in view and diligently pursued, it will go a great way towards leading us to a prosperous issue in most of those inquiries, which are thought to perplex this subject. But I mean to reason from it no farther than just to shew, in the way of specimen, the method in which it becomes us to speculate on the prophetic system. We are not to imagine principles, at pleasure, and then apply them to that system. But we are, first, to find out what the principles are, on which prophecy is founded, and by which it claims to be tried; and then to see whether they will *hold*, that is, whether they will aptly and properly apply to the particulars, of which it is compounded. If they will, the system itself is thus far clearly justified. All that remains is to compare the prophecies with their corresponding events, in order to assure ourselves that there is real evidence of their completion.

The *use* of this method has been shewn in FOUR capital instances. It is objected to the scriptural prophecies, *that they are obscure—that they abound in double senses—that they were delivered to one people—that, after all,*

SERMON III.

there is sometimes difficulty in making out the completion — all of them, it is said, very suspicious circumstances; and which rather indicate a scheme of human contrivance, than of divine inspiration.

To these objections it is replied, that, from the very idea which the scriptures themselves give of prophecy, these circumstances must needs be found in it; and further still, that these circumstances, when fairly considered, do honour to that idea: for that the obscurity, complained of, results, *from the immensity of the scheme* — the double senses, *from the intimate connection of its parts* — the partial and confined delivery, *from the wisdom and necessity of selecting a peculiar people to be the vehicle and repository of the sacred* oracles — And lastly, the incomplete evidence, *from the nature of the subject, and from the moral genius of that dispensation, to which the scheme of prophecy itself belongs.*

In conclusion, it is now seen to what purpose these preliminary discourses serve, and in what method they have been conducted.

The FIRST, shewed the vanity and folly of reasoning on the subject of scriptural prophecy

from our preconceived fancies and arbitrary assumptions. The SECOND, shewed the only true way of reasoning upon it to be from scriptural principles, and then opened and explained *one* such principle. In this LAST, I have shewn that, by prosecuting this way of reasoning from the principle assigned, some of the more specious objections to the scriptural prophecies are easily obviated.

Taken together, these three discourses serve to illustrate the *general* idea of prophecy, considered as one great scheme of *testimony* to the religion of Jesus; and consequently open a way for the fair and equitable consideration of *particular* prophecies, the more immediate subject of this Lecture.

SERMON IV.

THE GENERAL ARGUMENT FROM PROPHECY.

JOHN xiii. 19.

Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe, that I am He.

SERMON IV.

IT hath been concluded (not on the slight grounds of hypothesis, but on the express authority of scripture,) that prophecy was given TO ATTEST THE MISSION OF JESUS: to afford a reasonable evidence, that the scheme of redemption, of which he was the great instrument and minister, was, in truth, of divine appointment; and was carried on under the immediate cognizance and direction of the Supreme Being, whose prerogative it is to see

through all time, and to *call those things, which be not, as though they were*[a]. SERMON IV.

Our next inquiry will be, how the prophetic scriptures *serve* to that end, and what that *evidence* is (I mean, taking for granted, not the truth of the prophetic scheme itself, but the truth of the *representation*, given of it in scripture) which is thus administered to us by the light of prophecy.

I. The text refers to a particular prophecy of our Lord, concerning the treachery of Judas; of which, says he to his disciples, *I now tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He:* that is, "I add this, to the other predictions concerning myself; that, when ye see it fulfilled, as it soon will be, ye may be the more convinced of my being the person, I assume to be, the *Messias foretold.*"

The information, here given, was perhaps intended by our Lord to serve a particular purpose, To prevent, we will say, the offence, which the disciples might have taken at the circumstance of his being betrayed by one of

[a] Rom. iv. 17.

SERMON IV.

them, if they had not, previously, been admonished of it. But the reason of the thing shews, that the *use*, which the disciples are directed to make of this prophecy, was the *general* use of the prophecies concerning Jesus. The completion was to verify the prediction, in all cases; and to convince the world, That HE was the Messiah, in whom such things should be seen to be accomplished, as had been expressly foretold [b].

Indeed prophecies, unaccomplished, may have their use; that is, they may serve to raise a general expectation of a predicted *event* in the minds of those, who, for other reasons, regard the *person* predicting it, in the light of a true prophet. And such might be one, a *subordinate*, use of the prophecies concerning Jesus: but they could not be applied to the *proof* of his pretensions, till they were seen to be fulfilled. Nor can they be so applied even then, unless the things predicted be, confessedly, beyond the reach of human foresight.

Under these conditions, the argument is clear and easy, and will lie thus.—"A great

[b] Ταῦτα ὁ Θεὸς προεμήνυσε διὰ τῶν προφητικῶν πνευμάτων μέλλειν γίνεσθαι, ἵν', ὅταν γένηται, μὴ ἀπιστηθῇ, ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ προειρῆσθαι πιστευθῇ. J. MARTYR, *Apol.* I. c. 74.

variety of distant, or, at least, future events, inscrutable to human sagacity, and respecting one person (whom we will call, Messiah) have been by different men, and at different times, predicted. These events have accordingly come to pass, in the history and fortunes of one person; in such sort, that each is seen to be, in a proper sense, fulfilled in him, and all together in no other person whatsoever: Therefore the prediction of these events was divinely inspired: or (which comes to the same thing) therefore the person, claiming under these predictions to be the Messiah, or person foretold, hath his claims confirmed and justified by the highest authority, that of God himself."

Such is the argument from prophecy[c]: and

[c] Yet hear in how decisive a tone a certain writer, of no small account with the infidel party, reprobates this argument:—"Je dis de plus, qu'aucune prophétie ne "sauroit faire autorité pour moi." [Rousseau, Œuvres, T. III. p. 156. La Haye, 1762.] "I say," says Mr. Rousseau, "that the argument from prophecy can have no "weight with me." If you ask his reason, it follows. "Because, to give it any authority, three conditions are "required, the concurrence of which is impossible. First, "I must have been, myself, a witness of the prophecy, "when delivered. Secondly, I must have been, myself, a "witness of the event: And lastly, I must have it demon-

SERMON IV.

on this foundation, Jesus assumes to be the MESSIAH; and his religion, to be DIVINE.

"strated to me that the agreement between the prophecy "and the event could not have been fortuitous. For "though the prophecy were clearer, and more precise, "than a geometrical axiom, yet as the clearness of a pre- "diction, made at hazard, does not render the accom- "plishment of it impossible, this accomplishment, allow- "ing it to take place, proves nothing, strictly speaking, "in favour of the person who foretold it."

First, he says, *He must himself have been a witness of the prophecy.* But why so? Is there no way of being reasonably assured that a prophecy has been delivered, unless one has been actually present at the delivery of it? Does any one doubt, whether Socrates told his friend that he should die within three days' time, because he did not hear these words from the mouth of the philosopher? But, there is less reason still to doubt whether Jesus uttered the prophecies, ascribed to him in the Gospel.

Next, *He must have been, himself, a witness of the event.* With just as good reason, as of the prophecy. However, it so happens that we are, or may be, if we please, witnesses of the events, foretold in many prophecies. What does he think of the dispersion of the Jews, for instance? Is he not a witness of this event?

But lastly, *He must have it demonstrated to him that the agreement between the prophecy and the event could not have been fortuitous.* What, will nothing less than *demonstration* satisfy him? Will not a high degree of probability serve him to form a conclusion upon, nay, and to regulate his conduct? And will he stand out against the strongest degree of evidence, short of mathematical, or a proof *à la*

II. Let us now see, what the amount of that *evidence* is, which results from this kind of proof.

Careless talkers may say, and sometimes think, "that prophecy is but an art of conjecturing shrewdly; that the sagacity of one man is seen to be vastly superior to that of another; that, in some men, the natural faculty may be so improved by experience, as to look like *divination;* and that no precise bounds can be set to its powers." Light or sceptical minds may, I say, amuse themselves with such fancies: but serious men will readily acknowledge, That many future events, especially, if *remote*,

rigueur, as he terms it, in a subject, where, from the nature of it, mathematical certainty is not to be had?

Surely one needs be no great philosopher to see that all which is wanting to give authority to the argument from propheey, is, That we have *reason* to admit the delivery of a prediction — that we have *reason* to admit the completion of it — and that we have *reason* to think the agreement between the prediction and the event not fortuitous. And where is the impossibility that these three reasons should concur? — It is plain that the only one of these three reasons that appears in any degree problematical is the last concerning the completion of a prophecy in its event, whether it be fortuitous or not. Have I not reason then to say, as I do below p. 81, 82, that the strength of the infidel cause lies in this last consideration? — But what that strength is, we shall see as we go along.

SERMON IV.

or *extraordinary* [d], or described with some degree of *particularity*, are not within the ability of the human mind to predict. And, to cut off all occasion of cavil, let it be owned, that the argument under consideration is, or ought to be, drawn from the completion of prophecies, so qualified.

To evade the force, which this argument apparently carries with it, it must then be said, That the completion of any particular prophecy, alleged, was fortuitous, or, what we call, a *lucky hit*.

" Coincidencies of this sort, we may be told, are very frequent. In the ceaseless revolution of human affairs, some event or other will be

[d] Socrates foretold that he should *dye within three days:* and the event followed. — *Est apud Platonem Socrates, cùm esset in custodiâ publicâ, dicens Critoni suo familiari, sibi post tertium diem esse moriendum — quod, ut est dictum, sic scribitur contigisse* [Cic. de Div. l. i. c. 25.] Jesus foretold that he should suffer death by *crucifixion*. [John iii. 14. viii. 28. xii. 32.] He, likewise, foretold that he should *rise from the dead*, within *three days* after his crucifixion. [John ii. 19. Matth. xii. 39, 40.] — The *first* of these predictions might be a sagacious conjecture. Can it be said of such, as the *two last*, —

Augurium, ratio est, et conjectura futuri ?

Ovid. Trist. l. I. viii. 51.

turning up, which may give a countenance to the wildest and most hazardous conjecture. Hence it is, that every groundless fear, every dream, almost, has the appearance of being realized by some corresponding accident; which will not be long in occurring to those, who are upon the watch to make such discoveries. Upon these grounds, the superstition of *omens* hath, at all times, been able to sustain itself; and to acquire a degree of credit, even with wise men. We see, then, that *chance*, in a good degree, supplies the place of inspiration: and that He, who sets up for a Prophet, is likely to drive a safe, as well as gainful trade; especially, if he have but the discretion not to deal too freely in precise descriptions of *times*, and *persons*[e]: a consideration, of great moment to the men of this craft[f]; and which hath not been overlooked by those, whom we account *true* prophets."

[e] Hoc si est in libris, in *quem hominem*, et in *quod tempus* est? Callidè enim, qui illa composuit, perfecit, ut, quodcunque accidisset, prædictum videretur, *hominum et temporum definitione sublatâ*—said, in discredit of the Sibylline oracles [*De Div.* l. ii. p. 295. *fol. Lutet.* 1565]: how far applicable to the scriptural prophecies, will be seen in its place.

[f] Διὰ τὸ ὅλως εἶναι ἁμάρτημα ἔλαττον, διὰ τῶν γενῶν τῷ πράγματος λέγουσιν οἱ μάντεις. And again — οἱ χρησμολόγοι, ἐ προσορίζονται πότε. Aristot. Rhet. l. iii. c. v.

SERMON IV.

Such libertine reflections, as these, thrown out with an air of negligent ridicule, have too often the effect intended by them. At the same time, they disgust sober men, and are thought too light and trivial to deserve a confutation. But, because I take these suggestions, with whatever levity, or disingenuity, they may be made, to contain the whole, or at least, the chief strength of the infidel cause, on this subject, I shall not decline to give them a very serious answer.

IT IS TRUE, no doubt, what is here alledged, That the conjectures of fanciful or designing men, whether grounded on casual signs, or delivered in the direct way of prophecy, have been frequently verified in the events: that is, such events have actually come to pass, in the sense put upon the *sign*, when it was observed, and in the literal sense of the *prophecy*, as delivered. History and common life, it is agreed, abound in such instances[g]: and I shall even make no scruple to produce *one* of each sort; as much, at least, to the purpose of these

g Permultorum exemplorum et nostra plena est respublica, et omnia regna, omnesque populi, cunctæque gentes, augurum prædictis multa incredibiliter vera cecidisse.

Cic. de Leg. l. ii. p. 337.

objectors, as any of those, which they have produced for themselves.

Nothing is more famous in the annals of ancient Rome, than the story of Romulus, and his TWELVE VULTURES; an *omen* this, on which the auspicious name of the rising city, and the fortune of its founder, were, at once, established [h]. What further construction was then put on this prodigy, doth not appear: but, as the science of augury advanced in succeeding times, a very momentous and striking prophecy was grounded upon it. For we have it affirmed [i], on the high authority of M. T. VARRO, that Vettius Valens, an augur of dis-

[h] Certabant, urbem Romam, Remoramne vocarent.
Omnibu' cura viris, uter esset induperator.
- - - - - - -
Cedunt de cœlo ter quatuor corpora sancta
Avium, præpetibus sese, pulchrisque locis dant.
Conspicit inde sibi data Romulus esse priora,
Auspicio regni stabilita scamna solumque.
Cic. de Div. l. i. c. 48.

[i] Quot sæcula urbi Romæ debeantur, dicere meum non est: sed, quid apud Varronem legerim, non tacebo. Qui libro Antiquitatum duodevicesimo ait, fuisse Vettium Romæ in augurio non ignobilem, ingenio magno, cuivis docto in disceptando parem; eum se audisse dicentem: Si ita esset, ut traderent historici, de Romuli urbis condendæ auguriis, ac *duodecim vulturibus*; quoniam CXX annos incolumis præ-

SERMON IV.

tinguished name in those days, took occasion from this circumstance (and in the hearing of Varro himself) to fix the duration of the Roman empire. The TWELVE VULTURES, he said, which appeared to Romulus, *portended*, that the sovereignty of that state and city, whose foundations he was then laying, should continue for the space of TWELVE HUNDRED YEARS. It is of no moment to inquire, on what principles of his art the learned augur proceeded, in this calculation. The TRUTH is, that the event corresponded, in a surprising manner, to the conjecture; and that the *majesty* of the Western empire (of which Rome was the capital) *did*, indeed, expire under the merciless hands of the Goths, about the time limited by this augural prophet.

It should, further, be observed that this prediction was of such credit and notoriety, as to take the attention of the later Romans themselves[k], who looked with anxiety for the ac-

teriisset populus Romanus, ad *mille et ducentos* perventurum.

CENSORINUS *de die natali*, c. xvii. p. 97. Cantab. 1695.

[k] Hence Sidonius, in personating the city of Rome, makes her ask—

Quid, rogo, *bis seno* mihi *vulture* Thuscus aruspex
Portendit? Sidon. Carm. vii. 55.

And

complishment of it: and that it was delivered by Valens, at least *five hundred years* before the event; when there was not the least appearance, that this catastrophe would befall, what was called, the ETERNAL CITY, within that period.

THIS is an instance of divination from *augury*. The OTHER, I am about to give, is a *prophecy*, in full form; respecting a still more important subject, and equally accomplished in the event. A poet, in the ideas of paganism, was a prophet, too. And Seneca[1] hath left us, in proof of the inspiration to which, in his double capacity, he might pretend, the following oracle:

—— venient annis
Secula seris, quibus Oceanus
Vincula rerum laxet, et ingens
Pateat tellus, Tiphysque novos

And again, addressing himself to the same city,

Jam propè fata *tui bissenas vulturis alas*
Complebant (scis namque tuos, scis, *Roma*, labores.)
Ib. ver. 358.

And, before him, Claudian, to the same purpose—

Tunc reputant annos, *interceptoque volatu*
Vulturis, incidunt properatis sæcula metis.
B. G. ver. 262.

[1] Medea, ver. 374.

SERMON IV.

Detegat orbes; nec sit terris
Ultima Thule.

This prediction was made in the reign of Nero; and, for more than *fourteen hundred* years, might only pass for one of those sallies of imagination, in which poetry so much delights. But, when, at length, in the close of the *fifteenth* century, the discoveries of Columbus had realized this vision: when that enterprizing navigator had forced the barriers of the vast Atlantic ocean; had *loosened*, what the poet calls, *the chain of things*; and in these *later ages*[m], as was expressly signified, had set at liberty an immense continent, shut up before in surrounding seas from the commerce and acquaintance of our world; when this event, I say, so important and so unexpected, came to pass, it might almost surprize one into the belief, that the prediction was something more than a poetical fancy; and that Heaven had, indeed, revealed to *one* favoured Spaniard, what it had decreed, in due time, to accomplish under the auspices of *another*[n].

THESE two instances of casual conjecture, converted by time and accident into prophe-

[m] *Annis seris.* [n] Ferdinand.

cies, I shall take for granted, are as remarkable, as any other that can be alledged. Cicero, in his first book of *Divination*, where he laboured to assert the reality of such a power in the pagan world, was able to produce nothing equal, or comparable to them. We have the fullest evidence, that these two predictions were delivered by the persons, to whom they are ascribed; and in the time, in which they are said to have been delivered, that is, many hundred years before the event. They, both of them, respect events of the greatest dignity and importance: one of them, the downfal of the *mightiest empire*, that hath hitherto subsisted on the face of the earth; and the other, the discovery of a *new world*. Both, express the *time*, when these extraordinary events were to happen: the *latter*, by a general description, indeed, yet not more general, than is frequent in the scriptural prophets; but the *former*, in the most precise and limited terms. In a word, both these predictions are authentic, important, circumstantial: they foretell events, which no human sagacity could have foreseen; and they have been strictly and properly fulfilled.

Now, if such coincidencies, as these, do not infer divine inspiration; if, notwithstanding

SERMON IV.

all appearances to the contrary, it must still be allowed (as it will, on all sides) that they were simply *fortuitous*, or what we call the effects of hazard and pure chance, by what characters shall we distinguish genuine, from pretended, prophecies; or in what way shall it be discovered, that the scriptural prophets spake by the spirit of *God*, when these pagan diviners could thus prophecy, by their *own* spirit?

To this objection, put with all the force which I am able to give to it, I reply directly, That the distinction, so importunately demanded, may very easily and clearly be assigned.

If *one or two* such prophecies, *only*, had occurred in our scriptures; if even *several* such had occurred in the whole extent of those writings, and in the large compass of time they take up, without descending to a greater detail than is expressed in these pagan oracles; nay, if *a greater number still* of supposed predictions, thus generally delivered in the sacred writings, had been applicable only to single independent events, dispersed indifferently through the several ages of the world: In all these cases, I should freely admit, that the argument from prophecy was very precarious

and unsatisfactory: I could even suppose, with the deriders of this argument, that so many, and such prophecies, so directed, might not improbably be accounted for, from some odd conjuncture of circumstances; and that the accomplishment of them did by no means infer a certainty of inspiration.

But, if now, on the other hand, it be indisputable, That a vast variety of predictions are to be found in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament; That a great part of these predictions are delivered with the utmost degree of minuteness and particularity; and, lastly, That *all* of them, whether general or particular, respect one common subject, and profess to have, or to expect, their completion in one connected scheme of things, and, upon the matter, in one single person: On this latter supposition, I must still think, that there is great reason to admit the divine inspiration of such prophecies, when seen to be fulfilled.

To convert this supposition into a *proof*, is not within the scope and purpose of this Lecture. The work hath been undertaken and discharged by many others: or, it may be sufficient, in so clear a point, to refer you directly to the Scriptures themselves; which no man

SERMON IV.

can read without seeing, that the prophecies, contained in them, are extremely numerous — that many of these prophecies are minutely circumstantial — and that one person, whoever he be, is the principal object of them all. My concern, at present, is only to shew, that, if the supposition itself be well founded, the *inference*, just now mentioned, is rightly made.

1. First, then, if the prophecies in the Old and New Testament be very numerous, and if those prophecies, so many of them, I mean, as are alledged in this controversy with unbelievers, have had a reasonable completion (and I have a right to make this last supposition, when the question is concerning the *account* to be given of such a fact): If, I say, we argue from these two assumptions, it must appear highly credible and probable, that so numerous prophecies, so fulfilled, had not their origin from human conjecture, nor their accomplishment from what we call, *Chance*. For mere conjecture is not usually so happy; nor chance, so constant[o]. Further still; if the scriptural

[o] *Casu*, inquis. Itáne verò quicquam potest esse *casu* factum, quod omnes habet in se numeros veritatis? Quatuor tali jacti, *casu* Venereum efficiunt. Num etiam centum Venereos, si cccc talos jeceris, *casu* futuros putas? *De Div.* l. i. p. 259, Lutet. 1565.— Had the supposed case

prophecies have been completed in numerous instances, and if in *no* instance whatsoever can it be clearly shewn that they have failed in the event, the presumption is still stronger, that such coincidence could not be fortuitous; and a material difference between scriptural prophecy, and pagan divination is, at the same time, pointed out. For, that, in the multitude of pretended oracles in the days of paganism, some few only should come to pass, while the generality of them fell to the ground, may well be the sport of *fortune* [p]. But, that very many prophecies, recorded in our scriptures, have had an evident completion, when not *one* of all those, there recorded, can be convicted of imposture, must surely be the work of *design*.

The argument cannot be denied to have real weight, though the expression of *all* the pro-

been fairly applied to the subject, there had been an end of the dispute; as may appear from the pitiful answer, made in the next book to this reasoning — dixisti multa de *casu*: ut, Venereum jaci posse casu, quatuor talis jactis: quadringentis, centum Venereos non posse casu consistere. Primùm, NESCIO, CUR NON POSSINT. — Was this, like a philosopher?

[p] Multa vera, inquit, evadere. Quid, quòd multo plura, falsa? Nónne ipsa varietas, quæ est propria fortunæ, fortunam esse causam, non naturam, docet? *De Div.* l. ii. p. 295. This, methinks, looks like sense.

SERMON IV.

phecies were allowed to be *general.* But this is, by no means, the case. It is further assumed, and is evident to all that have read the Scriptures, that a great number of them are delivered with the utmost degree of minuteness and particularity. And, from this assumption, I infer,

2. Secondly, that the accomplishment of prophecies, so circumstantially defined, can still less be imputed to mere chance.

Without doubt, if all the prophecies concerning the Messiah had been penned in the style of the first—*that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*—though even then there might be reason for applying them, exclusively, to the person of Christ, yet, the evidence, that they were intended to be so applied, would have been much obscured by the mode of expression; the wide cover of which might seem to afford room for other applications. But when, to this general prophecy, the theme of all succeeding ones, it is further added, That this seed of the woman, should be the seed of Abraham; of the tribe of Juda; of the family of David; that he should be born at Bethlehem; that he should appear in the world at a time, limited by certain events, and

even precisely determined to a certain period: —when, after a particular description of his life and office, it is said of him, that he should be betrayed by an intimate friend; and sold for a price, exactly specified; that he should suffer a particular kind of death; should have his hands and feet pierced; should have vinegar given him to drink; and should be buried in the sepulchre of a rich man — with innumerable other particularities of the like nature [q] —When all this, I say, is considered; the improbability, that these *specific* characters should meet in the same person by *chance*, is so great, that a reasonable man will scarce venture on so hazardous a position.

3. Still this is not all. Were we at liberty to apply even *numerous, and circumstantial* prophecies, to *any* person, indifferently, whom they might suit, and to *any* events indiscriminately, to which they might correspond, sought out at large in the history of mankind, the force of the argument for *design* in such

[q] See the ancient apologists, who are frequent and large on this subject; and, of the moderns, see especially Huetii *Dem. Evang. Prop.* IX.—Bishop Kidder's *Dem. of the Messias*, c. ii. p. 17, 18. London, 1726, fol. — Dr Clarke's *Evidences of Nat. and Rev. Religion.* — *Pensées de M. Pascal*, p. 108.

SERMON IV.

prophecies, might in good measure be eluded. But, when we reflect on what, in part, hath appeared under the last article, that all the scriptural predictions profess to respect one certain scheme of things; run in the line of one people; and point ultimately at one person, whose country, and family, and age, and birth-place are exactly defined; the application of them is so limited and restrained, that, if they suit at all, there is scarce a possibility of excluding actual foresight, and intention.

LET ME, further, observe, that, as, upon this idea of a confined, connected, and dependent scheme, in the prophecies, the detection of imposture, if there be any, is much facilitated; so, on the other hand, if the prophecies can be fairly applied in this way, not only the presumption, that they were given to be so applied, is much increased, but a clearer insight into the scope and meaning of them, is obtained. For, in a system of prophecy, directed to one and the same general end, preceding prophecies prepare the way for interpreting those that follow, and every succeeding prophecy reflects some light on those that went before. Thus, the general evidence, arising from this species of argument, is, in all ways, augmented; while we see, that less room is

left to chance in verifying the more clear and direct prophecies, and that fresh light is let in upon such as are more ambiguous or obscure.

It is said, that many passages in the prophets are applied to Jesus, on very slight grounds. This would be true, if the prophetic scriptures, like the pagan oracles, had no determinate scheme in view, and had, for their object, only detached and unconnected events. But, on this scriptural principle, that one common purpose is in the contemplation of that divine spirit, which dictated all those writings, That is *expressed*, which is barely intimated; and every applicable prophecy is *rightly* applied: whence it is, that even secondary prophecies have, in the system of revelation, all the light and force of the primary; as, in a former discourse, hath been observed.

This assertion, I know, may startle such persons, as have not attended to the genius of the prophetic writings, or to that general harmony of design and destination, which makes their distinctive character: but it may be rendered familiar to us by reflecting on the *manner*, in which we interpret other writings, somewhat similar to these.

SERMON IV.

It is generally supposed, and on good grounds, that Virgil wrote his Æneid with the view of doing honour to the person and government of Augustus. But, the subject of his work being taken from a former age, this was either to be done, by introducing his encomiums under the form of *prophecies*, or by conveying them indirectly in allusive descriptions and, what we call, *secondary* applications. The poet hath employed both these methods, with success. The purpose of his *predictions* is clear; for in them the emperor is expressly named: and the ablest critics make no scruple of applying to Augustus all those passages in this poem, which, however they may respect, immediately, other persons, are yet clearly seen to be *applicable* to Him.

We have another instance of the same sort, at home. Our Spenser wrote his famous poem, to illustrate the virtues and reign of Queen Elizabeth. This we know from himself. Though his scene, therefore, be laid in *Faery Land*, yet, whenever we find his fictions agreeing to the history of that princess, or the characters of his knights expressive of those virtues, which distinguished the great persons of her court, we make no doubt of applying them in that way, or of the poet's intending that

they should be so applied. These applications would not be equally justifiable in *other* works of fancy, written in that time; but the knowledge, we have of the author's general purpose in writing, makes them reasonable in *this*.

It may appear from these examples[r], that, whenever a general scheme is known to be pursued by a writer, whose real or assumed character gives him a right to deal in secondary senses and prophetic anticipations, that scheme becomes the true key, in the hands of his reader, for unlocking the meaning of particular parts; of many parts, which would otherwise not be seen clearly and distinctly to refer to such scheme. The observation applies to the inspired writers, in all its force. We understand, that they had one common and predominant scheme in view, which was *to bear testimony to Jesus*. Their writings are, then, to be interpreted in conformity to that scheme. Not only the more direct prophecies require this interpretation; but, if we will judge in this, as we do in other similar instances, whatever passages occur in those writings, which bear an apt and easy resemblance to the history

[r] I take these examples to be more in point, than those given by Bishop Butler in his *Analogy*, P. II. c. vii. p. 386. Lond. 1740: not but those, too, have their weight.

SERMON IV.

of Jesus, may, or rather *must*, in all reasonable construction, be applied to him.

Whence we see (to mention it by the way) that, if no prophecy in the Old Testament had applied to Christ directly in its *primary* sense, Christianity might, yet, support itself on the evidence of prophecy. For the evidence, arising from a *secondary* sense of prophecies, is *real* evidence; and was certainly admitted, as such, by that great man[s], whose mistakes on this subject have afforded the occasion of so much vain triumph to infidelity.

Fancy, no doubt, may grow wanton in this sort of applications. It may find, in the prophet or poet, what was never designed by either: but, in the circumstances supposed, the severest reader will not deny, that *much* was probably designed by both. It is impossible to lay down general rules, that shall prevent all abuse in the interpretation of such writings. But good sense will easily see, in particular cases, where this liberty of interpreting is, in *fact*, abused.

It is obvious to remark, that this use of prophecy doth not commence, till the correspond-

[s] Grotius.

ing facts can be produced; that is, till the prophecies are seen to be fulfilled. But this circumstance is no discredit to the prophetic system; which pretends not to give immediate conviction, but to lay in, beforehand, the *means* of conviction to such as shall be in a condition to compare, in due time, the prediction with the event. Till then, prophecy serves only to raise a general expectation of the event predicted; that is, it serves to make men attentive and inquisitive, and to prepare them for that full conviction, which it finally hath in view. And this service, the prophecies of the Old Testament actually did the Jews, who were led by them to expect the Messiah, when he, in fact, appeared among them. And, had they pursued this reasonable method of interpreting the prophecies, not by their prejudices, but by corresponding events, they must have been further led to acknowledge his mission, as being evidently attested by predictions, so fulfilled. But their capital mistake lay in supposing, that their prophecies were sufficiently clear, without the help of any comment from succeeding events; and thus, what they *could not* see beforehand, they *would not* acknowledge, when these events came to pass.

SERMON IV.

It follows from what hath been said, that the obscurity of the Jewish prophecies concludes nothing against the *use* of those writings, or against the *application* of them, which Christians now make. Their *declared* use is posterior to the facts they adumbrate; whence the intervening obscurity of those writings is no just ground of complaint: and the *application* of them to Jesus, now that history hath taught us to understand them better, is made on principles to which no sober man can object.

On the whole, the general evidence for the truth of Christianity, as resulting from the scriptural prophecies, though possibly not *that* which some may wish or expect, is yet apparently very considerable. *Some* coincidencies might fall out, by accident; and *more*, might be imagined. But when *so many*, and *such* prophecies are brought together, and compared with their corresponding events, it becomes ridiculous (because the effect is, in no degree, proportioned to the cause) to say of such coincidencies, that they are the creatures of *fancy*, or could have been the work of *chance*.

The text supplies the only just account of such a phænomenon: and the spirit of God, methinks, calls aloud to us, in the language of his Son — *These things have I told you before they come, that when they come to pass, ye may believe, that I am* HE.

SERMON V.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING CHRIST'S FIRST COMING.

ISAIAH xlii. 9.

Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

SERMON V.

THE preceding discourses were designed, to open the *general idea* of prophecy; and to enforce the *general argument* from it, in proof of our holy Religion.

The way being thus far cleared, we now advance a step farther, and take a nearer view of THE PROPHECIES THEMSELVES.

SERMON V.

These prophecies may be considered under *two* heads. They either respect, *the person and character and office of the Messiah*; or, *the fate and fortunes of that kingdom*, which he came to establish in the world.

Divines call the *former* of these, Prophecies of his FIRST COMING: and the *other*, Prophecies of his SECOND. Only, it may be proper to observe, That the *second* advent of the Messiah is not, like the *first*, confined to one single and precise period, but is gradual and successive. This distinction is founded in the reason of the thing. He could only come, *in person*, at one limited time. He comes, *in his power and his providence*, through all ages of the church. His *first* coming was then over, when he expired on the cross. His *second*, commenced with his resurrection, and will continue to the end of the world. So that this *last* coming of Jesus is to be understood of his *spiritual kingdom*; which is not one act of sovereignty, exerted at once; but a state or constitution of government, subsisting through a long tract of time, unfolding itself by just degrees, and *coming*, as oft, as the conductor of it thinks fit to interpose by any signal acts of his administration. And in this sense, we are directed to pray, *that his kingdom*, though

SERMON V.

long since set up, *may come;* that is, may advance through all its stages, till it arrive at that full state of glory, in which it shall shine out in *the great day*, as it is called, the day of judgment.

It will be seen, as we advance in the present inquiry, to what use this distinction serves.

The *former* set of prophecies are presumed to have had their completion, in the history of *Jesus;* The *latter* set, have had, or are to find, their accomplishment, in the history of his *Religion;* And of THESE only, it is the purpose of this Lecture to speak.

But, though the prophecies of Christ's *first* coming (so largely and accurately considered by many great writers) be not the immediate subject of our inquiry, yet they must not be wholly overlooked by us. It will contribute very much to rectify and enlarge our ideas of the divine conduct, in this whole dispensation of prophecy, and to make way for that conviction, which the prophecies of Christ's *second* coming were intended to give, if we stop a while to contemplate the *method and œconomy* of that prophetic system, by

which the *first* advent of the Messiah was announced and prepared.

It is assumed, as a first principle on this subject, *That Jesus was the ultimate end and object of all the prophecies*[a]: which beginning from the foundation of the world[b], were, afterwards, occasionally delivered through many ages; till at length this great purpose was prosecuted more intently, by a continued and closely-compacted chain of prophecy; as we see, first, in the patriarchal history, but, chiefly, in the history of the Jewish state. For, when this people were selected from the other nations, to answer many wise ends of providence, it pleased God to institute a form of government for them, which could not subsist without his frequent interposition; manifested in such a way as might convince them, that they were under the actual and immediate conduct of their divine sovereign. Hence, it became a part of this singular œconomy, to be administered in the way of *Prophecy*; by which it would be seen that the hand of God was upon them in all their more important concerns.

[a] Serm. II.

[b] Ἀπ' αἰῶνος. Luke i. 70.

SERMON V.

Upon this basis of an *extraordinary providence*, the Jewish government stood: and we are now to see in what *manner* the prophetic spirit, so essential to that polity, was employed.

1. First, we may observe, that, by means of this provision for their civil regimen, an apt and commodious way was opened for carrying on the divine councils, in regard to *Jesus*; in whom, indeed, the Law itself was to be fulfilled. For, while the civil affairs of the Jewish people furnished the occasion and substance of their prophecies, the divine wisdom, that inspired the prophets, so contrived, as that their religious concerns should, also, be expressed, or implied in them. The general theme of the *prophet*, was some temporal success or calamity of the Jewish state: the secret purpose of the *inspirer* was, occasionally at least, and when he saw fit, to predict the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah [c].

[c] This use and intent of prophecy was seen, and admirably expressed, by the great *M. Pascal*—"Les propheties sont mêlées de propheties particulieres, et de celles du Messie, afin que les propheties du Messie ne fussent pas sans *preuves*, et que les propheties particulieres ne fussent pas sans *fruit*." *Pensées*, p. 112.

We have innumerable instances of this sort in the Jewish prophets; but few, more remarkable than that of Isaiah's prophecy, addressed to Ahaz, king of Judah, concerning his deliverance from the two kings of Samaria and Damascus. In the *primary*, but lower sense of this prophecy, the sign given was to assure Ahaz, that the land of Judæa should *speedily* be delivered from its two Royal invaders. But it had likewise *another*, and more important purpose. The introduction of the prophecy, the singular stress laid upon it, and the exact sense of the terms in which it is expressed, make it probable, in a high degree, that it had some such purpose: and the event hath clearly proved, that the *sign given* had a respect to the miraculous birth of Christ, and to a deliverance much more momentous than that of Ahaz from his present distressful situation—*Hear ye now*, O HOUSE OF DAVID—*The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isaiah*, vii. 13, 14. Admit that these words are capable of being explained, in some sort, of the *child* now given to be a sign, to the King of Judæa, of his deliverance within two or three years, as expressed in the following verses; still, who sees not that terms so emphatical

SERMON V.

and energetic are more *properly* understood of *another* child, to whose birth and character they are found, in the event, to be exactly suited? And, if more properly, who can doubt that these terms are *naturally*, that is, reasonably understood of that other child, when we consider with what ideas the mind of the prophet was stored, and what the ultimate end and object was, by supposition, of the prophet's inspiration? The child promised was a *sign* to Ahaz of his deliverance; yet a sign too, that is, a *type*, to the house of David, of another deliverance, which they expected, which their prophets had frequently foretold, and which we have here announced in the *name* of this miraculous child, IMMANUEL, or eminently, *The Deliverer*.

There is nothing in this *sign*[d], thus interpreted, but what is easy and unforced; I mean,

[d] *The Lord himself shall give you a sign*, Isai. vii. 14.—This SIGN (and the extraordinary introduction of it, in the words quoted, indicates no less) had plainly a recondite and even complicated meaning!

1. As addressed to *Ahaz*, it was simply an ASSURANCE, that his deliverance from his two great enemies was now at hand.

2. As addressed to the *house of David*—*Hear ye now, O house of David*—it was a TYPE of Christ.

if we bear in mind the genius and character of the Jewish prophecies. The former event, signified in the prophecy, was merely *civil*: the latter, concerned the *spiritual* kingdom of Christ. They were both predicted together: and the preceding event, when it came to pass, was, further, to induce an *expectation*, that the other event would, in due time, follow. For

2. Secondly, it appears, that, to excite attention to these SPIRITUAL predictions, more obscure than the other, and regarding events more remote, care was taken to secure the authority of the prophet, by the completion of his *civil* predictions in events, distinctly described, and near at hand. Thus, Moses might

3. It was, farther, a TOKEN, or pledge, that the remote deliverance of the house of David by Immanuel, should hereafter take place, just as the approaching deliverance of Ahaz, by the prophet's Son, would be seen to do.

4. This sign, when fulfilled in the near event, would, thenceforward, become a PROOF, or evidence, that it would be fulfilled in the remote one.

5. Lastly, in the Antitype, the sign was a MIRACLE, properly so called.

So eminently was this Child, a SIGN! A *sign*, in all the *senses* of the word, as employed by the Jewish prophets; and to all the *purposes*, for which signs were given.

SERMON V.

be believed by the Jews in what he said, *of a prophet to be raised up*, in a future age, *like to himself;* when they saw his prophetic blessings and curses upon them, according to their deserts in the land of Canaan, so speedily and so punctually executed. Thus, too, their prophet, Isaiah, might reasonably expect to find credit with them, for the glorious things predicted by him of the great deliverer, the Messiah; when their deliverance from the Babylonish captivity was seen so certainly to verify his prediction of that event. The prophet himself exults in this argument, as decisive and unanswerable. *Behold*, says he, in the text, *the former things are come to pass*, i. e. the prophecies, I have delivered to you concerning your redemption from the Assyrian bondage, will soon be so exactly completed, that I regard them as things *past; and therefore new things do I declare;* hence I claim your belief of other prophecies, concerning a much greater redemption, to take place hereafter, though there be no appearance, as yet, of any causes tending to produce it, *for before they spring forth, I tell you of them.* And this appears to be the general method of *all* God's prophets.

3. With these *new things*, these Spiritual prophecies concerning the *first* coming of the Messiah, were likewise intermixed other prophecies, which ran out beyond that term, and prefigured the great events of his SECOND coming: and the warrant for admitting *these*, would be the completion of those other prophecies, in the person and sufferings of Christ[f]. That there are such prophecies in the Old Testament, will be shewn hereafter. In the mean time, it will not be thought incredible, that, if Jesus be indeed the end of the prophetic scheme, the revolutions of his *government* should be foretold, as well as the circumstances of his personal appearance; in other words, that the consummation of that design, which Providence was carrying on, would not be overlooked, when the steps and gradations of it were so distinctly noted. For, in any reasonable design whatsoever, the *end* is first and principally in view, though the *means* engage, and may seem to engross, the attention of its author. It will then, I say, be no surprise to us to find, that prophecy set out with announc-

[f] Επειδὴ τοίνυν τὰ γενόμενα ἤδη πάντα ἀποδείκυμεν, πρὶν ἢ γενέσθαι, προκεκηρύχθαι διὰ τῶν προφητῶν, ἀνάγκη καὶ περὶ τῶν ὁμοίως προφητευθέντων, μελλόντων δὲ γίνεσθαι, πίστιν ἔχειν ὡς πάντως γενησομένων. JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apol.* i. c. 87.

SERMON V.

ing the kingdom of the Messiah; that it never lost sight of that future œconomy; and only produced it into clearer view, as the season approached for the introduction of it.

THUS MUCH concerning the *order and method* of the Jewish prophecies; in which one cannot but adore the profound wisdom of their author. The *civil* prophecies are, at once, the vehicle, and the credentials, of the *spiritual*, concerning the *first* coming of Jesus; and these last, in their turn, support the credit of others, which point still further at his *second* coming: a subject, more than intimated by the *legal* prophets, but resumed and amply displayed by the *evangelical*. Whence we see, that the prophetic system is so constructed, as, in the progress and various evolutions of it, to illustrate itself, and to afford an internal evidence of its divinity. One great purpose pervades the whole: and the parts, of which it consists, gradually prepare and mutually sustain each other.

But this subject, so curious and important, is not yet to be dismissed. It remains to be considered, whether *chance*, or *imposture*, can in any degree account for so extensive, so connected, and so intricate a system.

SERMON V.

On the very face of the prophetic scriptures it appears, that one ultimate purpose is in the contemplation of all the prophets. This purpose is unfolded by successive predictions, delivered in distant times, under different circumstances, and by persons, who cannot be suspected of acting in concert with each other. It does not appear, that the later prophets always understood the drift of the more ancient; or, that either of them clearly apprehended the whole scope and purpose of their own predictions. Yet, on comparing all their numerous prophecies with each other, and with the events, in which it is now presumed they have had their completion, we find a perfect harmony and consistency between them. Nothing is advanced by one prophet, that is contradicted by another. An unity of design is conspicuous in them all; yet without the least appearance of *collusion*, since *each* prophet hath his own peculiar views, and enlarges on facts and circumstances, unnoticed by any other.

Further still, these various and successive prophecies are so intimately blended, and, as we may say, incorporated with each other, that the credit of all depends on the truth of each. For, the accomplishment of them fall-

SERMON V.

ing in different times, every preceding prophecy becomes surety, as it were, for those that follow; and the failure of any one must bring disgrace and ruin on all the rest.

Then, again, consider that the prophetic spirit, which kept operating so uniformly and perpetually in what is called the *former age*, ceased at that very time, when the great object, it had in view, was disclosed; when that future œconomy, which it first and last predicted, was introduced: a *time*, too, which was precisely determined by the old prophets themselves. Could they answer for what *design* or *chance* might be able to bring about? Is it credible, that this perennial fount of prophecy, which ran so copiously from Adam to Christ, and watered all the ages of the Jewish church, should stop, at once, in so critical a season; and should never flow again in any future age; if fortune, or fraud, or fanaticism, had dispensed its streams, if any thing indeed, but the hand of God, had opened its source, and directed its current?

Nor let it be objected that a succession of prophets was *interrupted* for some ages before the coming of Christ. It was so: but not, till preceding prophets had marked out the precise

time of his coming[g]; not, till Malachi, with whom the word of prophecy ceased for a time, had foretold that this interrupted series should be resumed and finally closed by Elijah, the last Jewish prophet and *precursor* of the Messiah[h]; and not, till it had been expressly declared, that this eclipsed light of prophecy should break forth again with redoubled lustre, in the *days* of the Messiah[i]. Who would not conclude, then, from this very intermission, that prophecy was given, or withheld, as the wisdom of God ordained, and not as the caprice or policy of man directed?

It may not be pretended, that the age, in which prophecy finally ceased among the Jews, will account for the suppression of this faculty, "for that it was an age of the greatest turbulency and disorder, and that their ruin and dispersion soon after followed." This pretence, I say, is altogether frivolous. For it was precisely in those circumstances, that their ancient prophets were most numerous, and their inspirations most abundant. It was during the calamitous season of their captivities, that the

[g] Isaiah vii. 16. Daniel ix. 24.

[h] Mal. iv. 5. Luke xvi. 16.

[i] Joel ii. 28, 29.

SERMON V.

prophetic power had been most signally exercised among the Jews. And now, when they were carried captive into all lands, not a single prophet arose, or hath arisen to this day, either for their reproof, or consolation [k].

If it be said, "that the pagan oracles ceased, too, about the same time; and that the same cause, namely, the diffused light and knowledge of the Augustan age, was fatal to both;" besides, that this diffusion of light, for obvious reasons, was not likely to affect the Jewish prophecies, and did not, as we certainly know, in any degree diminish the credit of them, with that people, the fact itself, assumed in the objection, is plainly false. For the pagan oracles continued for several ages after that of Augustus; they became less frequent, only, as Christianity gained ground; and were not silenced, but among the last struggles of ex-

[k] Is not their case exactly delineated by the prophet Ezekiel—*Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour; then shall they* SEEK A VISION OF THE PROPHET; i. e. they shall seek what they shall not find, *for the* LAW *shall perish from the priest, and* COUNCIL *from the ancients*; i. e. their ecclesiastical and civil polity, to which prophecy was annexed, shall be utterly abolished. See Ezekiel vii. 26. and compare Isaiah iii. 1, 2.

piring paganism[1]. So that if the Jewish prophecies, like those of the Gentile world, had been the issue of *fraud*, or *fanaticism (principles*, that operate at all times, and, with redoubled force and activity, in the dark days of persecution) one does not see, why they might not have continued to this day among the bigoted professors of that religion.

Now, put all these things together, that is, The long duration of the prophetic system — the mutual dependance and close connexion of its several parts—the consistency and uniformity of its views, all terminating in one point — and the final suppression of it (as was likewise foretold) at the very time, when those views were accomplished; consider, I say, all this, and see, if there be not something more than a blind credulity in the advocates for the divinity of such a system. See, if there be any instance upon record—of so numerous prophecies—so long continued—so intimately related to each other and to one common end —so apparently verified—and so signally concluded. If there be, I shall not wonder at the suspense and hesitation of *wise men*, on this

[1] See A. VAN DALE, *de Oraculorum ethnicorum duratione atque interitu.*

SERMON V.

subject: but if, on the other hand, no such thing was ever seen, or heard of, out of the land of Judæa, they must excuse us if we incline to think their diffidence misplaced, and their scruples unnecessary, at least, if not disingenuous.

I descend no farther into a detail on the scriptural prophecies concerning Christ's *first coming*. The immensity of the subject, and the plan prescribed to me in this Lecture, equally restrain me from this attempt. *Obscurities* there may, and must be, in so vast a scheme: *Objections* may, and must occur to the construction and application of particular prophecies. But let any serious man take the Bible into his hands; let him consider, not *all* the prophecies in that book, but such as are more obvious and intelligible; and let him compare such *prophecies*, as he must acknowledge, and may, in part at least, understand, with the *facts*, in which he sees their completion, or so far, as he may think it *probable* that they have been completed; and I dare be confident that such an inquirer will be much struck with the amount of the evidence from prophecy, in support of divine revelation. If, indeed, on this general survey, he find nothing to affect him, I shall not desire him to push

his researches into the more secret and mysterious prophecies: much less, shall I advise him to wade through that cloud of smaller difficulties, in which the ignorant temerity of some writers, and the *obscure diligence* of others, hath involved *this*, as it easily may any other, subject.

To SPEAK PLAINLY, the only consideration, which to me seems likely to perplex fair and candid minds, is this—"That the argument from prophecy is understood to be addressed to those, who admit the divinity of the Jewish scriptures—that the Jews themselves were eminently in this situation—that, besides this advantage, the Jews were better qualified, than any others, to interpret their own prophecies, and to judge of their completion—and yet, that these very men neither were, nor are convinced by this argument."

Several things are here asserted, which deserve to be explained. I take them in an inverted order.

I. It is said, "*that the Jews were not, and are not to this day, convinced by the argument from prophecy.*" This allegation is in part

SERMON V.

false: for multitudes[m], from among the Jews, were, in the apostolic age, converted to Christianity; and these are well known to have laid a peculiar stress on this argument. The greater part of that people, indeed, disbelieved, and have continued to this day in their infidelity. But then let it be considered, 1. that we have an adequate cause of this effect, in the *prejudices* of the Jewish nation; *prejudices*, of which their whole history evidently convicts them. 2. That, notwithstanding their rejection of Jesus, they admit the existence and authority of those prophecies, which we apply to him; and that they themselves have constantly applied these very prophecies to their expected Messiah: so that the question between us is only this, Whether they, or we, *rightly* apply them. 3. That their perverse obstinacy in refusing to submit to the evidence of their prophecies, is itself foretold by their own prophets.

II. But it is further said, "*that their authority, in this controversy, is greater than ours, for that they must best understand their own prophecies, and judge best of their completion.*"

[m] The sacred text says — *myriads* — Θεωρεῖς, ἀδελφέ, πόσαι μυριάδες εἰσὶν Ἰουδαίων τῶν πεπιστευκότων — Acts xxi. 20.

1. I do not perceive on what ground of reason this is said. The old prophecies belong to us, as well as to them; and have been considered with as much diligence by Christian, as by Jewish expositors. Their customs, their history, their traditions, are equally known to both parties. Their very language hath been studied by Christians with a care, not inferior to that which the Jews themselves employ upon it; with a *care*, that not unfrequently, in *both*, hath degenerated into superstition.

If it be said, "that the *ancient* Jews, that is, the Jews in the time of Christ, must have been better qualified, than we now are, to interpret the prophecies, the language, they spoke, being only a dialect of that in which the prophecies are written," the answer is already given, under the last article: to which we may further add, that Christianity being much better understood now, than it was then, the force of the prophetic language concerning it (if, indeed, the prophecies have any such thing in view) must be more distinctly apprehended, in many instances, by Christians at this day, than it could be by the Jews, even when they spoke a dialect of the Hebrew language. So that still I do not see, upon the whole, what advantage the Jews, whether of

SERMON V.

ancient or modern times, can be thought to have over us, in explaining the prophetic scriptures. And then

2. As to the *completion* of the prophecies, the same histories are in the hands of both: and if they do not apply them, as we do the appeal is open to common sense. Every man is left at liberty to judge for himself, which side is best supported in the application of them. The prejudice might, indeed, be thought equal on *both* sides, if it were not decided by their own scriptures, that no prejudice of any people upon earth was ever so invincible, as that of the Jews.

3. Lastly, on both heads, there is a peculiar presumption, that they, and not we, are misled by prejudice: It is this: They were led by their prophecies, as interpreted by themselves, to expect that they would be completed at the *time*, in which, we say, they were completed; and it was not till after the coming of Christ that they began to interpret them differently, and to look out for another completion of them. Judge then, if they, or we, are likely to have erred most, through prejudice, in expounding and applying the prophecies. The natural and proper sense will be thought to be that, in

which we take them; for that sense occurred first to themselves, and was, in truth, *their* sense, before we adopted it.

When I say—*their sense*—I mean, especially, in respect to the *time*, which they had fixed for the accomplishment of the prophecies concerning the Messiah: for, as to their giving a *temporal* sense to some prophecies, in which we find a *spiritual*, that is another matter, concerning which, as I said, the appeal lies to every competent and dispassionate inquirer. In the mean time, it must be thought some presumption in favour of the Christian interpretation, that, whereas the JEWS, in rejecting a spiritual or mystical sense of those prophecies (which yet is admitted by them, without scruple, on other occasions, and is well suited to the genius of their whole religion) are driven to the necessity of supposing a *two-fold Messias*—a new conceit, taken up, without warrant from their scriptures, and against their own former ideas and expectations—WE, on the contrary, by the help of that spiritual sense, are able to explain all the prophecies of *one and the same Messias*, conformably to the *event*, and even to the *time* which the Jews themselves had prefixed for the completion of them.

SERMON V.

Now, when, of two interpretations, *one* has apparently all the marks of shift, constraint, and distress in it, and the *other* comes out easy, uniform, and consistent; we may guess beforehand, as I said, which of them is likely to be well-founded.

III. Still it is pretended, "that the argument from prophecy is properly addressed to those only who admit the divinity of the Jewish scriptures, as the Jews have invariably done; and that it hath no force, but on that previous supposition. Why then is the argument pressed on others, who do not believe the divine authority of those scriptures? And how should it prevail with *any*, whether believers or not, when the Jews themselves, who of all men most firmly believe that authority, are not convinced by it?"

The *latter* part of the difficulty, which respects the incredulity of the Jews, hath been already removed; so far, I mean, as it is founded on their prejudices. As for the *assertion*, "That the argument from prophecy presupposes the truth and divinity of the Jewish scriptures, and must therefore have most weight with the Jews, or rather hath no weight at all, but with them, or with others, who ad-

mit that common principle," though something, like this, may have been said, I take it to be wholly unsupported, as well by *fact*, as by any *good reason*. SERMON V.

1. I argue against this assumption from *fact*; that is, from the *method*, taken by the early Christians to convert the Gentile world, and from the *success* of that method.

If we look into the history of the Gospel, we shall find the Apostle Peter, pressing this argument from prophecy on the gentile Cornelius[n]; and the Apostle Paul, urging it with effect, on the Jews indeed first, but also on the Asiatic Gentiles[o]. If we turn to the Christian apologists, we shall find them addressing this topic to Gentile unbelievers, nay, as venturing the whole cause of Christianity on this single argument[p]. Justin Martyr makes as free use of it in his apology to the Antonines, as in his dialogues with Trypho. We know, too, the success of this argument, thus em-

[n] Acts x. [o] Acts xiii. 42. 48.

[p] Τίνι γὰρ ἂν λόγῳ ἀνθρώπῳ ϛαυρωθέντι ἐπειθόμεθα, ὅτι πρωτότοκος τῷ ἀγεννήτῳ ἐϛι, καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν κρίσιν τοῦ παντὸς ἀνθρωπείου γένους ποιήσεται, εἰ μὴ μαρτύρια, πρὶν ἐλθεῖν αὐτὸν ἄνθρωπον γενόμενον, κεκηρυγμένα περὶ αὐτοῦ εὕρομεν, καὶ οὕτως γενόμενα ὁρῶμεν;

JUSTIN MARTYR, *Apol.* i. c. 88.

SERMON V.

ployed, in many instances: and therefore see, as well the *fitness* of the argument to produce this effect, as the *judgment* of the Apostles and primitive Christians concerning its fitness. But to come

2. *to the reason of the thing.*

The Jews, who professed to believe, and did, in fact, believe, the divine inspiration of their sacred oracles, were, doubtless, bound by their own principles, to expect with assurance the due completion of them. The Gentiles, who did not previously respect those oracles as of divine authority, but regarded them only in the light of human conjectures, yet saw that such passages, whether we call them oracular or conjectural, did, in truth, occur in the Jewish scriptures; and were obliged to admit, on the faith of historical testimony, that those scriptures were composed by the persons whose names they bear, and at the times fixed for the composition of them. What then is the difference of the two cases? Only this: the Jews believed that their oracles would be fulfilled, because they held them to be divine; the Gentiles had to wait till those oracles were fulfilled, before they acknowledged their divinity. In either case, the argument is indepen-

dent of the belief, or the expectation, and turns on the completion only. Then, indeed, the Jew sees that his belief was well founded, and the Gentile admits that the prediction was divine.

The mistake would be equal, on the other hand, to conceive, that the argument from prophecy pre-supposes the divine inspiration of the New Testament. It pre-supposes only the historical truth of that book. Admit this, and compare the events recorded in that history, with the prophecies to which they correspond, and the divinity of both Testaments is proved. For then, the pretensions of Jesus are made good, by the *completion* of the prophecies; and the inspiration of the prophets is concluded, from the *delivery* of them.

In both cases (let me repeat it) it is not the authority of the books containing the prophecies, nor of the books recording the facts in which they are fulfilled, but simply the *completion* of the prophecies in those facts, seen and acknowledged, which infers the divinity of either Testament. Even the Jew would retract his high opinion of the prophecies, if he did not admit or expect the accomplishment of them; and the Christian would renounce his

SERMON V.

faith in Jesus, if his history did not accord to the prophecies, alledged.

'Tis true, that, with either, the argument would gain more *attention*, than with such as professed no previous belief in the divinity of the Old or New Testament. But its force is really the same, on both suppositions. It lies merely in the conviction, which one hath from the evidence produced, that certain prophetic passages were delivered in the *Old* Testament, and have been fulfilled by certain corresponding events, related in the *New*.

On the whole, there is no reason to conclude, that we are not as good judges of the argument from prophecy, as the Jews were; or, that this argument ought to have the less weight with us, because the Jews were not convinced by it. For the argument doth in no degree depend on *faith*, but is calculated to produce it. It is equally strong, or equally weak, to a Christian, or Jew, or even to an unbeliever: the sole point in question being this, Whether such things, as were prophetically delivered, appear to have been fulfilled: a point, on which common sense and common honesty will equally decide, on every supposition.

SERMON V.

I know, indeed, that, unless we suppose the inspiration of the prophets, *some* passages, delivered by them, will not so probably be thought to *intend* Christ, as they will be, if we acknowledge that principle: and, on the other hand, that there are *some* circumstances in the history of Jesus, which will not be so readily seen to *refer* to preceding prophecies, if the inspiration of Jesus and his Apostles be not previously admitted. But I do not argue, at present, from either of these topics. There are passages enough, clearly *predictive* of the Messiah, and clearly *accomplished* in him, to afford a solid foundation for the argument from prophecy, as here instituted, without looking out for any other of more nice and ambiguous interpretation.

Hence we see the dangerous mistake of those, who contend that the argument from prophecy hath not, of itself, the nature of a *direct positive proof* of our religion. Prophecies fulfilled, I mean such prophecies as *those* in question, prove invincibly the divine inspiration of the prophets. But, if the prophets were inspired, the divine mission of him, in whom the predicted marks of the Messiah meet, must needs be acknowledged. And what more is required to prove the truth of Christianity?

SERMON V.

Not even the evidence of *miracles*, performed by Christ, if the prophecies had not made them one mark of his character. The truth is, *Prophecies* and *Miracles* are, in themselves, two distinct positive proofs. Either proof is *direct*, and would have been sufficient, if the other had not been given. But the divine goodness, for our more abundant satisfaction, and to leave infidelity without excuse, hath made the one proof dependent on the other: so that neither the argument from prophecy is complete, without the *miracles*; nor the argument from miracles, as applied to Christ, unless he likewise appear to have fulfilled the *prophecies*. Can we desire a stronger proof, that neither *they*, who predicted the *miracles*, were *false prophets*, nor *he*, who claimed to himself the application of ALL the *prophecies*, was a *false Messiah*?

These reflexions, on the *method and order* of the prophecies, of those especially concerning Christ's FIRST COMING; together with what has been said on the *independency* of this argument on Jewish or Christian concessions; may serve to convince us, That we shall do well to suspend our conclusions concerning the evidence of prophecy, till we have examined the *whole* subject. In the mean time, *this*

part of the subject, thus far opened and explained, leads us, with advantage, to the consideration of *that*, which is yet behind and is the peculiar object of this Lecture, I mean *the prophecies concerning* CHRIST'S SECOND COMING. SERMON V.

SERMON VI.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING CHRIST'S SECOND COMING.

ISAIAH xlii. 9.

Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

SERMON VI.

IT must strike the most careless reader of the prophecies to observe, that the general subject of them all was announced from the earliest time, and was only drawn out more distinctly by succeeding prophets: that, of the two *ages*, into which the world of God, I mean his *religious* world, is divided in holy scripture, the *former*, which abounds most in prophecy, was

plainly made subservient to the *latter*: that not only the events of that preceding age are foretold by its own prophets, but that the fortunes of the last, and very remote age, are occasionally revealed by them; and that the same oracles, which attest the *first coming* of Christ, as if impatient to be confined to so narrow bounds, overflow, as it were, into the future age, and expatiate on the principal facts and circumstances of his *second coming*.

By this divine artifice, if I may so speak, the two dispensations, the Jewish and Christian, are closely tied together, or rather compacted into one intire harmonious system; such, as we might expect, if it were indeed formed, and conducted by him, *to whom are known all his works from the beginning* [a].

So that, in respect of the fortunes, which were to befall the Christian church, even in the *latter days*, we may still ask, in the triumphant terms of the Jewish prophet — *Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundation of the earth* [b]?

[a] Acts xv. 18. [b] Isaiah xl. 21.

SERMON VI.

But, though this subject was opened by the old prophets, so far as seemed expedient in that *age*, and clearly enough, to shew the integrity and continuity of the whole system, it was more illustriously, because more distinctly, displayed by the evangelical prophets.

And here, again, the same provision of wisdom and goodness meets us, as before. The Christian prophets, like the Jewish, bespeak our attention to what they reveal of the greater and more distant events in their dispensation, by other less momentous prophecies, which were speedily to be accomplished[c]; thus, impressing upon us an awful sense of their divine foresight, and procuring an easy credit from us to their subsequent predictions: *while the events, which both these prophetic schemes point out, are so distributed through all time, as to furnish, successively, to the several ages of the world, the means of a fresh and still growing conviction*[d].

[c] We see this design very plainly, in the prophecies of Jesus concerning *his own death and resurrection;* concerning *the descent of the holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost;* concerning *events, that were to befall his disciples;* and in other instances.

[d] La plus grande des preuves de Jesus Christ, ce sont les propheties. C'est aussi à quoi Dieu a la plus pourvû;

As THE ORDER of these Discourses, now, leads me to exemplify this *last* observation, I shall do it in THREE remarkable prophecies concerning the Christian church; I mean those, which respect 1. THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM. 2. THE DISPERSION OF THE JEWS. And 3. THE CONVERSION OF THE GENTILES.

I refer to these prophecies, as well known. They are in the number of those, which, in part, were delivered by the Jewish prophets; and afterwards, more distinctly revealed by the Christian.

I. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE JEWISH CITY AND TEMPLE, is an event of the utmost moment in the view of revealed religion. It accomplished a great number of prophecies, and vindicated the honour of Jesus, by a signal vengeance on his murderers. It answered, besides, *other* important purposes of divine providence; by putting a visible and necessary end to the Jewish œconomy, which was now to give way to the dispensation of the Messiah;

car l'evenement, qui les a remplies, est un MIRACLE SUBSISTANT depuis la naissance de l'Eglise jusqu' à la fin.

M. Pascal.

SERMON VI.

and by dispersing the Jews into all lands, for many wise and admirable reasons. Hence, of all the prophecies, delivered by Christ himself (who was a prophet, though indeed *much more than a prophet) This* alone is displayed by him, at large, and in all its circumstances.

If any man, unacquainted with these matters, should doubt, whether this prophecy of Jesus, as recorded in three of the four Gospels, were not delivered, that is, *forged*, after the event, I might refer him to the numerous writers on that subject. But I hold it sufficient to say, 1, On the faith of all antiquity, that these Gospels were not only written, but published to the world, before the destruction of Jerusalem — 2, that the early date of their composition is apparent from many internal characters, dispersed through these writings — 3, that no interpolation of this prophecy could afterwards take place, because the prophecy is interwoven with the general thread of the history — and, 4, lastly, that no unbeliever of the primitive times, whether Jew or Gentile, when pressed, as both frequently were, by this prophecy, appears to have had recourse to the charge, either of forgery, or interpolation [e].

[e] For these particulars, see Dr. Jortin's *Rem. on Ecclesiastical History*, vol. I. p. 20—89.

The authenticity and early date of the prophecy is, then, on these grounds, assumed.

I will, further, suppose (because the history of Josephus invincibly proves it) that all the particulars, mentioned in this prophecy, concurred in the *event*.

"But this, you will say, might well be: for what more *uniform*, than the characters of distress in a *great* city, forced and desolated by a superior enemy? And what more *probable*, than that, some time or other, such should be the fate of *every* great city?"

It may further be insinuated, "That, if ever Jerusalem was to be destroyed, the obstinate humour of its inhabitants, and the *nature of the place*, would probably draw this destruction upon it, in the way it actually happened, in the way of *siege*[f]: that, then, all the miseries, endured by the Jews, would naturally fall on a desperate people from an irritated and successful conqueror; above all, in ancient

[f] An event, it must be owned, the more likely to happen, as the Jews had always been disposed to *trust to their high and fenced walls*; which yet could never defend them from their enemies, as their history shews, and, as Moses had distinctly foretold, *Deut.* xxviii. 52.

SERMON VI.

times, when conquest and clemency were little acquainted with each other: that, as for the preceding *wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes* (which are mentioned, in the prophecy, as *signs* of the approaching desolation) *these*, are such usual things in the course of the world, as may be safely made the prognostics of any predicted event whatsoever: that Jesus, therefore, as any other wise man, might form his prediction on these principles; and trust to time, and the passions of mankind, for the completion of it."

Now, let all this be allowed (and scepticism itself will hardly make other or greater demands upon us) still, the honour of Jesus stands secure; and this fine fabric of suspicion is overturned at once, if we reflect on *two or three* circumstances, unluckily, and, if the prophet be not divine, unnecessarily wrought into the texture of this famous prophecy.

First, I observe, that this destruction was to come from *the hands of the Romans* [s]; and,

[s] Matth. xxiv. 28. and compare Luke xvii. 37. Ὅπου ἐὰν ᾖ τὸ πτῶμα, ἐκεῖ συναχθήσονται οἱ ἀετοί. — Meaning by *eagles*, the standards of the Roman army. — Some writers of name have, indeed, observed, that this is only a *proverbial* expression. True: but proverbial prophecies are

without doubt, if it were to happen in any reasonable time, it could not so probably be expected to come from any other quarter. But, then, was it *likely* that Judæa, at that time a Roman province, should be thus desolated by its own masters? Was it to be *presumed*, that so small a province should dare to engage in a formal contest with Rome, the mistress of the world, as well as of Judæa? with Rome, then in the zenith of her power, and irresistible to all nations? Was it *conceivable*, if any future distraction of that mighty empire should tempt the Jews to oppose their feeble efforts to its high fortune, that a vengeance so signal, so complete, should be taken upon them? that nothing less than a total *extermination* should be proposed, and effected? The ruin of the

often fulfilled in the strict literal sense of the expression; as Grotius well observes on Matth. xxvi. 23. hîc quoque accidit, quod in *multis aliis vaticiniis*, ut verba — non tantùm secundùm proverbialem loquendi modum, sed etiam secundùm *exactissimam verborum significationem* implerentur. — If the reader calls to mind the prediction of our Lord, as it is elsewhere expressed, without a figure — *when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with* ARMIES [Luke xxi. 20] — and compares it with the *event*, he will hardly make a doubt whether *eagles*, in those figurative predictions, which respect the same subject, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, were not intended by our Lord to denote, the ROMAN armies.

SERMON VI.

temple at Jerusalem was to be so entire, that *one stone should not be left upon another*. Allow for the exaggerated terms of a prophetic description; still, was it *imaginable*, that the Romans should, in any proper sense of the words, execute this denunciation? Was it *their* way, as it was afterwards that of the Goths, to wage war with *stones*? Was it a principle with *them*, to beat down the *pride* of buildings, as well as of *men*[h]? Would even their *policy*, or their *pride*, have suffered them to blot out an ancient, a renowned, an illustrious temple, the chief ornament of their province, the glory of the East, and the trophy of their own conquests?

Such an event was very improbable, in contemplation: and history shews, that it did not come to pass in any ordinary way. For the instrument, in the hands of Heaven, of this exterminating vengeance, was a man, the most unlikely of all others to inflict it; a man, who by nature abhorred such extremities; who, in fact, did his utmost to prevent this dreadful cata-

[h] — debellare *superbos*. Virg.

[i] Assuredly this prophecy was not in the number of those, of which it hath been said — *The prophecy is not occasioned by the event, but the event by the prophecy* — *L'evenement n'est pas predit parcequ'il arrivera; mais il*

strophe, and *could not* prevent it[i].—Still, a more unmanageable circumstance, than this, occurs in the prophecy. For,

Secondly, it is implied that ONE of our Lord's disciples should survive this desolation[k]: and it is expressly asserted, that the then *subsisting generation should not pass away, before all these things were accomplished*[l]. They WERE accomplished, within forty years from the date of the prophecy, and before the death of that disciple. The fact is certain and undeniable: I leave the rest to your own reflexions.

Thirdly, warning is given in this prophecy to the disciples of Jesus, to fly from this impending ruin; and a signal is held out to them, for that purpose[m]. It is further predicted, that they should avail themselves of this signal; and so entirely escape the snare, in which the rest of their countrymen should be taken, that *not a hair of their heads should perish*[n]. And

arrive parcequ'il a été predit. ROUSSEAU, *Nouv. Hel.* t. iv. p. 314. n. Neuf. 1764.

[k] Matth. xvi. 28.

[l] Matth. xxiv. 34.

[m] Luke xxi. 20.

[n] Luke xxi. 18. Acts ii. 21. Mark xiii. 20.

SERMON VI.

this part of the prophecy was, it seems, completed [o].

Lastly, this prophecy was incumbered with another strange event, *needlessly* incumbered with it, if the whole were an imposture. It is said, *that the Gospel should be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations*, before it should be fulfilled. Was it not enough to say, that the prophecy should be accomplished in the time of that generation, and in the life-time of St. John, without adding so unlikely a circumstance, as that a general promulgation of the Gospel, by a few unlettered and unfriended fishermen, should precede the accomplishment of it?—I know, that this part of the prophecy admits a secondary sense: but, in the primary sense, it was so far fulfilled, as to astonish us with the divine foresight of its author.

I omit other considerations, that might be alledged. But you see that, setting aside such particulars in the prophecy, as sceptical men may think themselves able to draw within the sphere of *human conjecture*, there are several

[o] See the learned Bishop Newton's *Dissertations on the Prophecies*, vol. ii. p. 268. 2.

things expressed in it, so strange to all apprehension, so unlikely to happen, so impossible for any natural sagacity to foresee, and yet so certainly and punctually fulfilled, that nothing short of *divine inspiration* can possibly account for them. The prophecy, in all its parts, is divine: but in *these*, its divinity is clear and incontestable.

II. THE DISPERSION OF THE JEWS, is another event, which deserves your consideration.

Moses himself had predicted this circumstance of their fortune, in terms of the greatest energy. He had told them — *that they should be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, and that they should be scattered among all people from one end of the earth even unto the other* — that, among the nations, into which they should be driven, *they should find no ease, nor rest, and that they should be only oppressed and crushed alway* — that they should *become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations* — and that *their plagues should be wonderful, and of long continuance* [p]. These prophecies had been, to a certain degree, fulfilled in other parts of their

[p] Deut. xxviii.

SERMON VI.

history: but there was to be a time, when *the wrath of God should come upon them to the uttermost* [q]. This time was now come, when their city was destroyed, and their land desolated, by the arms of Titus. Then, as Jesus prophesied of them, *were the days of vengeance, that all things, which were written, should be fulfilled:* then, were they *to be led away captive into all nations:* and thenceforth, *was Jerusalem to be trodden down of the Gentiles, until* THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES SHOULD BE FULFILLED [r].

Nor say, that this *last* prophecy is *indefinite:* for *the times of the Gentiles* is a period, well known in the prophetic writings; a period, of long duration indeed, as the event hath shewn; yet a period, marked out by other prophecies (which may come, in turn, to be considered in this Lecture) no less distinctly, than their other captivities had been.

For, to all these predictions there must be added *one* more, which expressly asserts the return of this people, in some future age, from their long and wretched dispersion: for *blindness, in part,* only, *hath happened to Israel;* and that again, *till the fulness of the Gentiles*

[q] 1 Thess. ii. 16. [r] Luke xxi. 22. 24.

be come in[s]. This, St. Paul terms *a mystery:* and yet the ancient prophets had a glimpse of it, when they foretold, *that the Lord would not make a full end of them*[t], and that a remnant of them *should remain, and should return in the latter days*[u]. Moses himself, who had denounced such heavy judgements upon them, and of so *long continuance,* during their dispersion, had mingled, with his woes, this one note of mercy — *And yet for all that, when they lie in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them* UTTERLY, *and to break my covenant with them*[w].

Consider these predictions, and compare them with the present and past state of this people for seventeen hundred years; and see, if there be nothing to take your attention, or, rather, your astonishment, in the completion of them.

Why is this dreadful vengeance, *singular* in its circumstances, and never yet experienced by any other people on the face of the earth,

[s] Rom. xi. 25. [t] Jer. xlvi. 28.
[u] Isai. x. 21. Ezek. vi. 8.
[w] Lev. xxvi. 44.

SERMON VI.

why is this peculiar vengeance executed on the Jews?—Or, whatever the *cause* may be, is not the *fact* such as was predicted?

"The predictions, you will say, have the appearance of being fulfilled. But where is the wonder, that a people, distinguished by a *singular* religion, and above measure *addicted* to it, should continue to exist under that distinction, and should be every where known by it? That a people, on account of their profession, more than commonly obnoxious to the other religious sects, among whom the earth hath been chiefly parcelled out—to the *Heathen*, for their unconquerable aversion to idolatry—to the *Christians*, for the atrocious murder of their founder—to the *Mahometans*, for the constant rejection of their prophet—should be the scorn and outcast of all three: and that, being excluded from the only country, to which they have any attachment, they should be vagabonds on the earth, and should disperse themselves indifferently through every quarter of it, as caprice, or interest, or convenience, invites them? that, lastly, being thus distinguished from all men, and thus at enmity with all, they should never be suffered to enter into any other civil community, or to establish a distinct community of their own?"

SERMON VI.

But the wonder doth not lie, altogether, where these questions seem to place it. That the Jews, while they profess themselves such, should be thus treated, may be natural enough: but that they should *continue*, for so many ages, under such treatment; every where and always spurned, reviled, oppressed; yet neither worn out by this usage; nor induced by it to renounce their offensive profession, and take refuge in the mass of people among whom they live; that neither time, nor custom, nor suffering, should get the better of their bigotry or patience; but that they should still subsist a numerous, a distinct, a wretched people, as they do, to this day—all this hath something prodigious in it, which the common principles of human nature will not easily explain [x].

We, who admit the divine origin of their religion; and adore, with them, the extraordinary providence, by which their polity was so long administered and upheld; can, better

[x] Hear the profound and reflecting M. Pascal—L'etat où l'on voit les Juifs est une grande preuve de la Religion. Car c'est une chose étonnante de voir ce peuple *subsister* depuis tant d'années, & de le voir *toujours miserable*—et, quoique il soit contraire, D'ETRE MISERABLE, & DE SUBSISTER, il subsiste neanmoins toujours malgré sa misère. PENSEES, p. 115.

SERMON VI.

than any others, explain this difficulty. For, what so likely to produce an invincible attachment to their Law, as the abundant evidence, they had of its authority? But neither will this account of the matter be found satisfactory. For, as if on purpose to discredit this solution, their history informs us, That *ten*, of the twelve tribes, which originally composed their nation, did, in fact, disappear under their last captivity, and were, in a good measure at least, absorbed in it. If such, then, was the fate of *Israel* in its dispersion, within the compass of not many generations, and yet the relics of *Judah* are still preserved in all countries to this day, what better or other reason can we assign for this difference of fortune in two branches of the same people, equally attached to the same divine Law, than that the *former* were left to the natural consequences of a dispersion, and that the *latter* were purposely kept from being affected by them, as the prophecies had distinctly foretold?

If it be still said, "That there is nothing more extraordinary in this continuance of the Jews, under their dispersion, than of other religionists in like circumstances; of the *Christians* for instance, under the Turkish dominion;" the cases (to say nothing of the dif-

ference in point of *time)* are, in many respects, entirely unlike.

The Asiatic CHRISTIANS derive a confidence, and some degree of protection, from the many flourishing Christian empires, which subsist in other quarters of the world.

THEY, can perform all the duties of their religion, as perfectly in the countries, where they reside, as in any other.

THEY, have the future hopes of the Gospel, the proper sanction of their Law, to support them in all the distresses, to which their Christian profession may, at present, expose them. What is it to them, as St. Austin well observed in a like case, that they suffer for a season in a strange land; when even in their *own*, that is, a Christian country, they are still obliged, by the principles of their religion, to consider themselves, *as strangers and pilgrims on the earth*[y]?

[y] —Multò minus nomen criminandum, in captivitate sacratorum suorum, qui supernam patriam veraci fide expectantes, *etiam in suis sedibus peregrinos se esse noverunt.* *Aug. De Civ. Dei*, l. i. 15.

SERMON VI.

The condition of the JEWS, on the other hand, is widely different. THEY, profess a religion, founded on temporal promises, only: and how miserably these have failed them, the experience of many ages hath now shewn.

The JEWS, are shut out from the only country in the world, where the several rites and ordinances of their religion can be regularly and *lawfully* observed.

The JEWS, have, besides, the sensible mortification of knowing, that all their brethren of the dispersion are every where in equal distress with themselves; and that there is not one Jewish state or sovereignty subsisting on the face of the whole earth.

It follows, that in the JEWS, we find nothing but their *destiny*, so plainly read to them by their own prophets, as well as ours, to account for their long continuance in their present dispersion: whereas, the *Asiatic Christians* have many resources of comfort within themselves; and may subsist, in Mahometan countries, on the same general motives and inducements, which sustain the courage of other unhappy men.

Yet, notwithstanding the advantages, here pointed out, on the side of the Asiatic Christians, the *fact* is, that they are reduced to a very small number, and are insensibly melting away under the oppressions of their Ottoman masters; so that in no long time, if that enormous tyranny should be permitted to continue, they may, not improbably, quite vanish out of those countries, where they had formerly so many and flourishing churches: whereas, the Jews continue every where to abound in great numbers; they thrive under their oppressions; and seem to multiply amidst their distresses; as if the order of things were reversed in regard to them, and the same causes operated to the conservation of this people, which tend so naturally to the waste and destruction of every other.

Still, I have another reflexion, or two, to make on this interesting subject.

1. It deserves to be considered, that the *natives* of any country, though subdued and enslaved by a foreign nation, may, indeed, subsist very long under that distinction. Thus, the Gentoo Indians have preserved their name and race, under their Mahometan invaders: and thus, the Moors, if they had not been vio-

SERMON VI.

lently expelled, might have continued a distinct people for many ages, in their old Spanish quarters. But that small colonies of men, transported into *strange* and populous nations, should preserve a distinct existence, and not insensibly moulder away, and mix themselves with their numerous native masters; This, I think, is without example in the history of mankind. If the Jews might be expected to abound any where, it should, methinks, be in Judæa; where the sight of the *holy land*, and the memory of their past fortunes, might invigorate their prejudices, and perpetuate their attachment to the Jewish name and worship. But it so happens, that the number of Jews in that country hath now for many ages been inconsiderable, while they swarm in every other.

2. It should, further, I think, be observed, that a *sect*, whether you will call it of *religion*, or *philosophy*, may subsist through a long tract of ages; I mean, that certain opinions may continue to be professed by some people, or other, without intermission; as may be true of the *doctrine* concerning *the two principles*, at all times so prevalent in the East; of that species of eastern *idolatry*, which consists in the worship of *fire*; and in other instances.

But that these opinions, in circumstances any thing like those of the Jews, should still be professed, not only by some, but by the *same* men, that is, by men known to be of the same extraction, as well as of a certain persuasion; this, again, is, I think, a circumstance of great singularity, and altogether unprecedented in the case of any other people. Who knows, of what race or family the present Manichees are descended, or the professors of the old Persian idolatry? The followers of the Mosaic law, are every where known to be of the stock of Abraham. They are distinguished in all places, as being Jews by *descent*, as well as by *Religion*.

3. Supposing, what I think cannot be shewn, that the history of the world furnishes an instance or two of a people circumstanced in all respects, as the Jews are; these extraordinary cases would not much abate the wonder, we are now contemplating. For how happened it, that a prophecy delivered above three thousand years ago concerning the fate of a *particular* people, should be so exactly verified, as it has hitherto been, when that fate is so far from being a common one, that it has only taken place, in one or two instances besides, within the compass of so many ages? And still

SERMON VI.

more, how should it enter into the head of Moses to deliver this prophecy, when, at the time of his delivering it, he had absolutely no instance before his eyes of such fate, in the case of *any* people?

These things, then, deserve to be well and seriously considered.

Lastly, We believe, on the faith of the sacred oracles, that the Jews shall *never be destroyed utterly*, but shall exist a distinct people, as they have hitherto done, *till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.* But here, you will say, the prophets indulged a natural prejudice in favour of their own nation; it being the way of all people to delight in such dreams of *existence and perpetuity.* It may be so: But see, whether this *dream* hath ever yet been so far realized, in the case of any other people. The Romans, for instance, were as partial to themselves, and doted as much on the idea of their *perpetuity*, as the Jews. But what now is become of their *eternal empire?* Consider, therefore, the singular fate of the Jews through so many ages, and see whether it be not credible from what is past, that the prophet was moved by something more than a spirit of *national vanity*, when he said, *Fear*

thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord, for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, BUT I WILL NOT MAKE A FULL END OF THEE [z].

To these prophecies concerning *Jerusalem*, and the *Jews*, I add

III. *A third, concerning* THE CALL AND CONVERSION OF THE GENTILES TO CHRISTIANITY.

This prophecy is very remarkable, whether we consider — *the matter of it — the persons, by whom it was delivered* — or, *the manner, in which it hath been fulfilled.*

1. As it had been declared from the beginning, that in the promised seed, *all the nations of the earth should be blessed*, so the Gospel, or, the good tidings of that blessing, was, in due time, to be communicated to *all nations*. Further still, this Gospel was not only to be published to all nations, but to be acknowledged and received by them. There are numberless prophecies to this purpose in

[z] Jer. xlvi. 28.

SERMON VI.

the books of the Old Testament: prophecies, which say expressly—*that God would give unto the Messiah the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession*[a]—*that from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, his name should be great among the Gentiles*[b]—*It is a light thing*, says the prophet Isaiah, addressing himself, in the person of the Almighty, to the Messiah, *that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth*[c]. And Jesus himself, when he commissioned his Apostles to publish his doctrine, did it in these words—GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD, AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE[d].

It is unquestionable, therefore, from these and other passages[e], that not the Jews only, but all nations were to be instructed in the Christian faith; that the Gospel was to be an

[a] Ps. ii. 8. [b] Mal. i. 2.

[c] Is. xlix. 6. [d] Mark xvi. 15.

[e] The reader may see many of them collected, and the general argument from them well inforced, by Mr. Bullock, in his VINDICATION, Part II.

universal religion; and that, thus, the Messiah was to be, in every sense, the Saviour of mankind. There is no doubt, I say, but that such is the language of the prophets; and that they clearly suppose the dispensation of the Gospel to have these views, and to terminate in this event.

But now, let any man consider with himself, what it is to proselyte the whole race of mankind to one faith, and to one religion. Let him revolve in his mind this great, this magnificent idea. Let him, next, turn his thoughts on what history and experience may suggest to him on the subject. And then let him tell us, whether there be not something extraordinary in this project; whether, indeed, there be any other example of this sort in the annals of mankind.

In the old world, the institutors of *pagan religion* looked no further, than to single communities: each destined his ceremonies for his own people only; and never presumed so far on the truth or importance of his religious scheme, as to set it up for a standard of belief or worship to the other nations of the earth. Even the *Jewish ritual* was so constituted as

SERMON VI.

to respect the Jews only, and was even practicable no where but in the land of Judæa.

But this idea of universality was equally strange to the *Doctors*, as to the Legislators, of the ancient world. Sects of philosophy, there were many; espoused with zeal, and propagated with industry; and some of them, of no small extent. Yet the most sanguine, or the most successful of these speculatists never conceived so much as the idea of bringing all nations into their system. They presumed, indeed, that truth, or probability at least, was on the side of their favourite opinions; but they beheld a neglect of them in others, with a sort of indifference; and, contenting themselves with their own superior skill or felicity, left it to the rest of the world to philosophize in their own way, and on their own principles. They seem not to have thought it either necessary or possible, that their own sentiments should become the standing, universal persuasion of mankind.

Ambition, I know, hath been sometimes enterprizing enough to think of subduing the whole world. But this was the ambition of *power*, not of religion, or philosophy: it was an ambition to subdue the *bodies*, not the

minds of men. This *last* was a project, too big for a Cæsar or an Alexander, much more, for a Numa or an Aristotle, to entertain. And I think it certain, that, except in the scheme of Christianity, or such other schemes of revelation as have been copied from it[f], we shall no where find the idea of *universality* to have taken place in any religious or philosophical sect whatsoever[g].

If then this idea was *familiar* to the Jewish and Christian prophets, you will, at least, conclude that this circumstance is remarkable enough to engage your attention; and you will naturally ask, how it came to pass that those

[f] As in the case of *Mahometanism*, for instance.

[g] What the Philosopher Celsus thought of such a project, we learn from a curious passage in Origen. It being usual with the Christians of that time, as of every other, *to pray for the conversion of the whole world to the Christian faith*, the philosopher laughs at the extravagance of this petition. He observes upon it, ὅτι ὁ τοῦτο αἰτούμενος οἶδεν εἰδέναι. The words are not easily translated. But the *meaning* of them is, That he regarded an universal agreement in one mode of religious belief, as a perfect chimæra: and the *turn* of the words is so contrived, as to express the utmost contempt of those, who, in their supreme ignorance of mankind, could entertain so senseless an idea. *Contr. Celsum*, l. viii. *sub. fin.*

SERMON VI.

prophets should adopt so strange a fancy, which appears not to have entered into the views or conceptions of other men.

When you are in this train of inquiry, it will surprize you still more to find,

2. *By what persons, these prophecies,* so remarkable for the *matter* of them, *were announced.*

The publishers of this extraordinary doctrine were, in one word, JEWS: that is, men of the most narrow and contracted minds; men, brought up in the highest conceit of themselves, and in the utmost scorn and contempt of the Gentiles; men, accustomed to think themselves the only favourites of Heaven, and to regard the rest of the world, as outcasts of its providence; men, in short, induced, partly, by the genius of their religion, ill understood, and partly, by their carnal temper, long indulged, to believe with assurance the perpetuity, the eternity of their divine law; and to deem it impossible that God should reign anywhere but in the land of Israel, or should impart his blessings to any that lived out of the Jewish pale.

SERMON VI.

Was it, now, to be expected of such men, as these, that they should enlarge their ideas so far as to form the project of a new and universal religion; a religion, not imprinted outwardly on the flesh, but *written in the heart*; a religion, that was to supersede and evacuate the law of Moses, to which they were so immoderately addicted, and to enlighten and bless and save the heathen, whom they so perfectly despised and abhorred?

You will suspect, perhaps, that the meaning of these prophecies was no more, than that the Jewish Law should finally prevail over all other Laws, and be the sole predominant religion of the whole earth: a prejudice, very likely, it may be said, to possess the minds of such a people as the Jews; and suitable enough to that zeal, which prompted them *to compass sea and land*, as Jesus himself observed of them, *to make one proselyte*[h].

But the contrary is apparent from the *structure* of the Jewish Law, which, as I said, was so contrived, that it could not be observed out of Judæa—from the *tenour* of that Law, addressed only to the house of Israel, and not

[h] Matth. xxiii. 15.

SERMON VI.

obligatory to any other people—from express *declarations* of the prophets themselves; who call the dispensation of the Messiah, *a new Covenant*, a covenant *written in the heart*, in opposition to the law of circumcision[i]; who say, that the Lord will *create new heavens and a new earth*, that is, in the prophetic language, will institute a *new* dispensation of religion, different from that, which he had given to the Jews, and *subversive* of it[k]; who, lastly, speak of this dispensation, as of *one*, that should be established under *a new name*, and should be embraced by the Gentiles, as *such*, that is, by men, converted immediately to this new religion from their state of Gentilism, without passing through the strait gate of the Jewish Law[l].

[i] Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers—but this shall be my covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, *I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts*, &c. Jer. xxxi. 31—33. See also Jer. iii. 16.

[k] For behold, *I create new heavens and a new earth*: and the *former shall not be remembered nor come into mind*. Is. lxv. 17.

[l] The *Gentiles* shall see thy righteousness, and all Kings, thy glory: And thou shalt be *called by a new name*, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Is. lxii. 2.

Judge, then, whether the prophets did not mean more than a *proselytism* to their own religion, when they predicted, and in such terms, the future conversion of the Gentiles; and whether such ideas, as these, could ever have entered into the hearts of Jews, if something, besides and above the natural suggestion of their own minds, had not inspired their prophecies.

Add to all this, if you please, that Jesus was himself a Jew, and (to regard him as a man only) in the lowest class of the Jews, that is, of the most confined and bigoted education; and yet was not restrained by his prejudices from giving that sublime command to his followers — GO AND TEACH ALL NATIONS.

But enough on the *doctrine* itself, and on the *character* of its teachers. It remains only

3. To add one word, *on the manner, in which this prophecy*, concerning the conversion of the Gentile world, *appears to have been completed.*

There are especially TWO prophecies on this subject, which merit our attentive consideration. ONE of them asserts, that the conver-

SERMON VI.

sion of the Gentile world shall take its rise from small and very unpromising beginnings, and yet shall prevail speedily and to a vast extent; the OTHER, that it shall prevail by pacific means only, without the intervention of any force or violence whatsoever.

1. The FORMER of these prophecies is expressed thus—*A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time*[m]. In allusion to this prophecy, concerning the rise and progress of Christianity, is that parable of our Lord applied to the kingdom of heaven—*the kingdom of heaven*, says he, *is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree: so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof*[n]. And, with regard to the *celerity* with which this tree should grow up, we have a prophecy from Christ himself, and that wonderfully fulfilled—that *his Gospel should be preached to all the world for a testimony to all nations*, before the destruction of

[m] Is. lx. 22.

[n] Matth. xiii. 31, 32.

Jerusalem, or within forty years from the date of the prophecy. SERMON VI.

Now, consider the state of the Gospel, at our Lord's ascension. It was left in the hands of a few, mean, unlearned, dispirited persons: without any countenance from authority; and with every difficulty, every terror, opposed to them, and placed distinctly within their view. *Matth.* xxiv. 9. Yet these men were commissioned to spread this Gospel through the world, and had an express promise, that they should succeed in their attempt. Against all appearance, the success followed. In less than half a century, *the sound of the Gospel went out into all lands;* and, within three centuries from the death of Christ, Christianity ascended the imperial throne; *and had the utmost parts of the earth for its possession.*

To encrease the wonder, this amazing revolution was brought about, by *pacific methods only;* as was, likewise, foretold

2. In the LATTER of the *two* prophecies, to which I before alluded.

Jesus himself quotes this prophecy from Isaiah in the following words—*Behold, my*

SERMON VI.

servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment, i. e. declare a new Law, *to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoaking flax shall he not quench,* i. e. (as all interpreters explain these proverbial expressions) he shall not employ the least degree of force or violence in the propagation of this law, *till he send forth judgment unto victory,* till it finally prevail against all opposition; *And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.* Matth. xii. 18—21.

Let any man read the history of Christianity, from its first publication in Judæa, to the conversion of Constantine, and then see whether this prophecy hath not been exactly and illustriously completed. The followers of Jesus were numerous enough, long before the empire became Christian, to have attempted the way of force, had it been permitted to them[o]: and the insults, the oppressions, the persecutions, which they suffered from their Pagan

[o] Si enim et hostes *exertos*, non tantùm vindices occultos, agere vellemus, *deesset nobis vis numerorum et copiarum?* *Tertull. Apologet.* c. 37.

enemies, were enough to provoke the most passive tempers to some acts of hostility and resistance [p]. But every one knows, that they had recourse to no arms, but those of the spirit: they took no advantage of distracted

[p] Could it be *foreseen*, that nothing of this sort would happen? When the *Reformation* was set on foot in Germany, Luther and his adherents resolved to carry it on in the spirit of the Gospel, that is, by *pacific measures*. But how soon did passion and policy strike in, to drive them from this purpose! The Catholics were intolerant: the Reformed grew powerful: and then, what was too naturally to be expected, followed.

If it be said, that the Gospel hath not been always propagated, *without force;* I acknowledge, it has not: but then I observe, 1. that it was incontestably so propagated, till the conversion of the Roman empire; in which event, alone, the prophecies appear to have had a reasonable completion. 2. that the *force employed*, has generally been the force of one Christian sect, directed against some other (in which scandalous contentions the prophecies have no concern), not in the propagation of Christianity itself in unbelieving countries. 3. that the *way of force*, when professedly used against unbelievers, though, in *some* cases, it has contributed to the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, has yet, in *others* (where, too, the utmost force and zeal were combined) very signally failed of success; of which the *crusades against the Mahometans* afford a striking instance: and 4. lastly, that we expect the *final universal* prevalence of the Christian faith from the same spiritual arms only, which were first employed with such success in the propagation of it.

SERMON VI.

times, to raise commotions in behalf of the *new* religion, or to suppress the *old* one: *a bruised reed did they not break, and smoaking flax did they not quench:* yet with meekness, and patience, and suffering; by piety, by reason, by the secret influence of a divine blessing attending on these feeble efforts, the doctrine of the cross insensibly gained ground, spread itself far and wide, and in the end became *victorious* over all the rage and power and sophistry of an unbelieving world [q].

q An eminent writer, with the view, indeed, of disgracing the Reformation, hath set this matter in a very just light: "Que nos freres, says he, ouvrent donc les yeux; qu'ils les jettent sur l'ancienne Eglise, qui durant tant de siécles d'une persecution si cruelle ne s'est jamais échapée, ni un seul moment, ni dans un seul homme, & qu'on a vûë aussi soûmise sous Diocletien, et même sous Julien l'apostat, lorsqu'elle remplissoit deja toute la terre, que sous Neron & sous Domitien, lorsqu'elle ne faisoit que de naitre: C'EST LA QU'ON VOIT VERITABLEMENT LE DOIGT DE DIEU." *Hist. des Variations*, l. x. c. 53.

The finger of God, as the learned writer says, was indeed conspicuous in this conduct of the primitive Christians, because it fulfilled the prophecies (so unlikely to be fulfilled) concerning the *manner* in which Christianity was to obtain an establishment in the world. If the conduct of the *reformed* had not this merit, it was because the prophecies did not extend to the reformation of Christian religion, but to the introduction and first settlement of it. The agents, in this last work of Providence, were there-

That this *victory* hath not been, hitherto, so complete, as to answer the promise of an *absolute universality*, we readily acknowledge; but are in no pain for the event[r]; as the same oracles, which have thus far been verified, suppose the present condition of things; and, what is more, assure us of a time to come, when *the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in.*

One word more, and I have done. If it be now thought, that these THREE prophecies — *concerning the destruction of Jerusalem* — *the dispersion of the Jews* — and *the call of the Gentiles* — have been clearly accomplished;

fore left to the natural influence of their passions, and they acted too frequently as those passions impelled them.

For the rest, how far the *general* precepts of the Gospel require a passive submission and non-resistance to outrageous intolerance, whether absolutely, and in all cases, is a point of nice discussion; in which I take no part, at present, because I am not now making the apology of the *reformed*, but shewing the completion of the prophecies concerning the *propagators* of Christianity: and the wonder to see them so punctually completed, is not lessened, but increased, by supposing, that the precepts of the Gospel leave mankind to the free use of their natural rights, in the case of extreme violence and injustice.

[r] *The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lye: though it tarry, wait for it, because it shall surely come, it will not tarry.* Habakkuk, ii. 3.

SERMON VI.

and yet were of that nature, that no human foresight could deliver them, nor any probable conjuncture of human affairs account for the accomplishment of them, you will conclude that they were truly divine, and that we do not abuse your credulity in alledging such prophecies, in proof of our holy religion. You will see and acknowledge that there *are* prophecies, recorded in scripture, *concerning the Christian Church*; and that *these* prophecies, in particular, concerning it, have been remarkably fulfilled. Ye will, therefore, the less wonder to find, that there are still *other* prophecies, relative to the kingdom of Christ, as administered in this world; and will, of course, be disposed to consider, with less prejudice, what may further be said in support of them.

SERMON VII.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING ANTICHRIST.

1 Ep. John ii. 18.

— Ye have heared that Antichrist shall come —

AMONG the more remarkable prophecies concerning the Christian Church, there are several, which describe the rise, progress, and downfal of a certain Power, represented under various symbols or images, and distinguished by many appellations; but more especially known by the name of Antichrist.

These prophecies come now, in the order of this Lecture, to be considered. The subject

SERMON VII.

is, in a high degree, curious and important; but of no easy discussion: not so much on the account of any peculiar difficulty in the prophecies themselves, as from the prejudice of party in *explaining* them, and still more, from the general prejudice that lies against every *attempt* to explain them.

To make my way through all these obstructions, I shall begin with laying before you a clear and distinct state of the question itself, which is chiefly agitated by inquirers into these prophecies.

It is admitted, that many predictions in the Old and New Testament, particularly in the book of Daniel, in St. Paul's Epistles, and in the Revelations of St. John, clearly point out a very extraordinary power, which was to manifest itself *in the latter times*, that is, in the times subsequent to the introduction of Christianity. The characters, by which this power (acknowledged by all under the name of Antichrist) is chiefly distinguished, are those of *Tyranny*[a], *Idolatry*, and *Intolerance*. And,

[a] By the word *Tyranny*, here and elsewhere in these discourses, as applied to the Pope, I would be understood to mean, that *super-eminent dominion*, which he

to abridge our trouble in searching after this *three-headed* monster, we are directed by the prophets to look for him within the boundaries of what was properly called, the Roman Empire, and even in the city of Rome itself.

Thus far there is no dispute. The only question is, To what Roman power, exhibiting those characters, the prophecies are to be applied. And even this question is reduced within narrow limits. For TWO Powers only have subsisted in Rome, from the Christian æra to the present times (within which period we are, again, allowed to expect the reign of Antichrist); the Roman Emperor, in the first place; and, afterwards, the Roman Pontifs. So that, on the whole, the single point in debate is merely this, Whether Imperial, or Papal Rome, be that Antichristian Power, which the prophets foretold. The church of Rome holds, for obvious reasons, that the *Imperial* power is the object of the prophecies: the Protestants have, on the contrary, their reasons for maintaining, that *Papal* Rome is that power, which

exercised, or claimed a *right* of exercising, over the princes and states of his communion, in all affairs both temporal and spiritual.—I use the word (somewhat improperly, perhaps) for the sake of brevity, as I know of no other single term, that so well expresses my meaning.

SERMON VII.

the prophecies had in view, and in which alone they are truly and properly verified.

This, then, is the meaning of that famous inquiry concerning Antichrist: and I must desire you to keep your attention steadily fixed on the question, as here stated; while I endeavour to furnish you with the proper means of deciding upon it.

The obvious method of doing this, would be, To lay before you, directly, the prophecies themselves, and to examine them by the light of sober criticism, and authentic history. But, because it is no new or difficult thing to misrepresent *facts*, and to misinterpret *scripture*, to pervert, in short, these two instruments of truth to any ends, which prejudice hath in view; and because I know how natural it is for you to suspect such management in the present case, where the zeal of party is supposed, on either side, to exclude, or over-power, the love of truth; for *these reasons*, it may be convenient to take a larger compass, and, by a previous historical deduction of this controversy, to let you see in what light it has been regarded, through the several ages of the Christian Church.

SERMON VII.

1. THE FIRST ACCOUNT, we meet with in scripture, of the power in question, I mean, under his proper name of *Antichrist*, is in the first epistle of St. John, from which the text is taken. The whole passage runs thus — *Little children, it is the last time: And, as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

To understand these words, we must call to mind what hath been already, more than once, observed concerning the scriptural division of time into two great portions, The FORMER, and LATTER times. By the *former*, is meant the times preceding the Christian æra; by the *latter*, the times subsequent to it. Correspondent to this partition of time, is the double advent of Christ, of which I before gave a distinct idea. His *first* advent was, when he came in the flesh at Jerusalem: his *second* advent is to be understood of his coming in his kingdom, through all the ages of the Christian Church.

But though the *latter times*, in the general sense of scripture, be thus comprehensive, they are further subdivided into other constituent portions, in which some particular state of

SERMON VII.

Christ's kingdom is administered, and within which it is completed. In reference to this subordinate division of time in the Christian dispensation, the *coming* of Christ is, also, proportionably multiplied. He *comes* in each division; that is, as oft as he thinks fit to interpose by any signal act of his power and providence. The whole period, in which any distinct state of his kingdom is carrying on, is likewise called *the latter time;* and the concluding part of that period is distinguished by the name of the *last hour:* as if the whole of each period were considered as *one day;* and the close of each period, as the end, or *last hour,* of that day.

Thus, the time that elapsed from Christ's ascension to the destruction of Jerusalem, being one of the subdivisions, before mentioned, is called the *latter times;* and the eve of its destruction, is called the *last hour.* He *was coming* through the whole time: he *came* in the end of it. And the like use of these terms is to be made, in other instances. We are to apply them in the same manner to the *reign of Antichrist—to the Millennium*—to the *day of judgment.* Each of these states, into which the *latter times,* or the times of Christianity, are divided, is likewise spoken of

under the idea of the *latter times*; and the season, in which each is drawing to an end, is the *last hour* of that state[b].

Thus much being premised, it is easy to give a just exposition of the text. *Little children, it is the last time,* or *hour*—that is, the destruction of Jerusalem is at hand; as indeed it followed very soon after the date of this Epistle. *And, as ye have heared that Antichrist shall come*—that, in some future period, called *the last times,* an hostile power, which we know by the name of Antichrist, shall arise and prevail in the world, *even now,* we may see the commencement of that power; for, *there are many Antichrists;* many persons, now, appear in the spirit of that future Antichrist, and deserve his name: *whereby,* indeed, *we know that it is the last hour:* for Christ himself had made the appearance of false Christs and false prophets, that is, of Anti-

[b] What is here said of the scriptural division of *time,* with regard to the affairs of the *Church,* is enough for my purpose. There is another division of time, in the prophetic scriptures, with regard to the *kingdoms of the world:* concerning which the reader may consult BISHOP KIDDER'S *Dem. of the Messiah,* Part iii. ch. ix.; and especially Mr. MEDE'S *Apostasy of the latter times,* ch. xi.

SERMON VII.

christs, to be one of the signs by which that *hour* should be distinguished[c].

The meaning of the whole passage, then, is clearly this: "That the appearance of *false Christs* and *false Prophets* (of which there were many, according to our Lord's prediction, in St. John's time) indicated the arrival of that *hour*, that was to be fatal to the Jewish state: and that they were, at the same time, the types and forerunners of a still more dreadful power, which should be fully revealed in *the latter times*, in a future period, when that calamity was past." For the truth of the assertion, That such a power should arise in the Christian church, he appeals to a tradition, then current among the disciples: and his hated name of *Antichrist* is here applied, by way of anticipation, to the false prophets of that time; as possessing much of his character, and acting with his spirit.

Hence we see the meaning of the word, *Antichrist;* which stands for a person or power, actuated with a spirit opposite to that of Christ. And so indeed the Apostle explains himself, in another place of this very Epistle. For, speak-

[c] Matth. xxiv. 24. Mark xiii. 21.

ing of certain false teachers, who preached up a doctrine, contrary to that of the Gospel, he adds—"This is that *spirit* of Antichrist, "whereof ye have heard that it should come, "and even now already is it in the world[d]." And I lay the greater stress on this observation, because the etymology of the word, *Antichrist*, makes it capable of two different meanings. For it may either signify one, who *assumes the place and office of Christ*, or one, who *maintains a direct enmity and opposition to him*[e]. But the *latter*, is the sense in which the Apostle useth this term; although it be true that, in the *former* sense, it very well suits the Bishop of Rome, who calls himself the *Vicar* of Christ, as well as the successor of St. Peter. Nor can there be any difficulty in fixing the charge of Antichristianism, in the sense of *an enmity and opposition to Christ*, on the Roman Pontif (though I know how absurd the attempt seems to the writers on that side); for, to merit this charge, it is not necessary that he should formally reject Christ, which undoubtedly he does not, but that he should act in defiance to the true genius and

[d] 1 Ep. John, iv. 3.

[e] Ἀντίχριστος—ἀντί, in the sense either of *pro*, or *contra*.

SERMON VII.

character of Christ's religion: a charge, which may be evidently made good against him.

In short, as the word, *Christ*, is frequently used in the Apostolic writings for the *doctrine* of Christ; in which sense we are said to *put on Christ*, to *grow in Christ*, to *learn Christ*, and in other instances: So *Antichrist*, in the abstract, may be taken for a doctrine subversive of the Christian; and when applied to a particular man, or body of men, it denotes *one*, who sets himself against the *spirit* of that doctrine [f].

[f] Grotius says, "Sicut *Anticæsarem* dicimus qui contra Cæsarem se Cæsarem vult dici atque Cæsar haberi, sic *Antichristus* est qui se vero Christo opponit *eo modo* ut ipse Christus haberi velit." OP. t. iv. p. 490.—The learned commentator did not reflect, that words are not always used according to the strict import of their etymologies. *False Christs*, we will say, are, in the strict sense of the word, *Antichrists*. But the question is, in *what* sense this word is used of the person called, by way of eminence, THE ANTICHRIST. This must be collected from the attributes given to him in the prophecies themselves, not from the rigorous etymology of the term. The case was plainly this. St. John is speaking of the *false Christs*, who had appeared in his time; and, to disgrace them the more effectually in the minds of those to whom he writes, he brands them with the name of *Antichrists*: not so much respecting the exact sense of the word, as the ideas of aversion, which, he knew, it would excite. For the tra-

In this last sense, the word *Antichrist* is clearly employed by St. John: and from his example, the word grew into general use in the Christian church; and is so to be understood, whenever mention is made of Antichrist by the primitive fathers, or any other ecclesiastical writers.

II. I am now to shew in what manner the prophecies concerning *Antichrist*, or a person or power, so called, and, though variously described, always considered under the idea of an adversary to the true doctrine of Christ, have been construed and applied by many eminent members of the Christian Church, in all ages.

1. When the canon of scripture was formed, and now in the hands of the faithful, the pro-

dition of the church concerning *Antichrist*, had made this appellation, of all others, the most opprobrious, and hateful. — Besides, it is not so clear, as Grotius supposes, that the strict sense of the word, *Antichristus*, must be — *is, qui se vero Christo opponit eo modo ut ipse Christus haberi velit*. Cæsar, who generally expressed himself with exact propriety, thought fit, on a certain occasion, to assume the name and character of, ANTICATO. Was it Cæsar's purpose to say, or was it his ambition to pretend, "*that he opposed himself to the true Cato,* EO MODO *ut ipse* CATO *haberi vellet?*"

SERMON VII.

phecies concerning Antichrist were too remarkable not to take their early attention. They accordingly cite these prophecies in their apologies and commentaries, or refer to them, very frequently. But one thing is singular. Though Antichrist be every where spoken of in the prophecies as a persecuting power, and though the Christian church then was, and so continued to be for near three centuries, in a state of persecution under the Roman emperors, yet this opprobrious name was not usually given to their persecutors. I do not say, that none of the early Christian writers ever applied that character to the Emperors. Some few of them, in a fit of zeal and resentment, did[s]. But the most, and the ablest of the Fathers, were clearly of another opinion.

It may be thought, that they forebore this application of so odious a term, out of respect to the government under which they lived, and from prudential considerations. These motives had, without doubt, their weight with

[s] Eusebius mentions, JUDAS, H. E. l. vi. c. 2; and DIONYSIUS, E. H. l. vii. c. 10.—*Others*, seemed to expect that Antichrist would appear as the Messiah of the Jews; but in the person of a Roman Emperor; as will be explained presently. See the next note.

them, and made them more cautious, than they would otherwise have been, in interpreting the prophecies. But, if they had been at liberty to speak out, and declare their full sense, on the subject, it is certain they would not, and could not, consistently with their avowed principles, apply the prophecies concerning Antichrist to the Roman Emperors. For they had learned from tradition, and from the letter of the prophecies, that Antichrist was to be revealed in some distant age; and they even collected from a remarkable passage in one of St. Paul's Epistles (which will be considered hereafter) that the removal of the Roman empire was to make way for his appearance. Hence, they give it as a reason for their ardent prayers to Heaven for the preservation of the empire, that the dreaded power of Antichrist could not commence, so long as the Imperial sovereignty subsisted. And it is observable that, of those few writers, who were in different sentiments, the greater part conceived the time of his coming to be *remote;* and were even driven to the strange necessity of supposing that Nero, the first persecuting Emperor, was miraculously kept alive, or would be raised up from the dead, in order to be revealed in a future age, as the Antichrist of

SERMON VII.

the prophets, or at least as the *Precursor* of Antichrist[h].

In short, the idea, which the early Christians, in general, formed of Antichrist, was that of a power, to be revealed in distant times, after the dissolution of the Roman empire; of a power, to arise out of the ruins of that empire. Not to multiply quotations, on a point which admits no doubt, Jerom, the ablest of the ancient Fathers, and the most esteemed, shall speak for the rest. He says expressly, that such was the idea of *all the ecclesiastical writers*, down to his time, as is here represented[i].

Now this circumstance ye will surely think not a little remarkable, that they, who lived under the emperors, and felt the whole weight of their tyrannous persecution, should not apply the prophetic notes and characters of Antichrist, to *them*, if indeed the prophecies had been fairly capable of such application. This, I say, is exceedingly remarkable: for men are but too apt even to wrest the scriptures to a

[h] See many citations to this purpose in Dr. Lardner's *Cred.* p. ii. v. p. 210, 11, 12.

[i] Jerom, in Dan. vii. Mede, p. 657.

sense, which favours their own cause, or gratifies their passions; and to find a completion of prophecy in events, which fall out in their own days and concern themselves (as we see from so many absurd applications of the Apocalypse, justly objected to certain Protestant writers); though, when such events are past, and impartially considered, no such accomplishment of prophecy can be discerned in them.

When the church of Rome, therefore, now pretends, that Antichrist is to be sought in Imperial and Pagan Rome, ye will naturally ask how it came to pass, that the ancient fathers, who had the best opportunity of seeing the conformity of the prophecies with the transactions of their times, and were so much interested in those transactions, should yet overlook such conformity, if it had been real, and fairly marked out by the prophecies, when interpreters of these days are so quick-sighted? And to this question, no just and satisfactory answer can be given, but that, in the opinion of those fathers, the characters of Antichrist were not sufficiently applicable to the Roman emperors; or, if they were, that certain express clauses in the prophecies themselves forbade that application of them. Either way, their conduct forms a strong presumption, that

SERMON VII.

the Antichrist of the prophets was not, and could not be, the Roman Emperor.

I know indeed, that, when the empire became Christian, and factions sprang up in the church, the name of Antichrist, as a term of reproach, was not unfrequently bestowed on such of the emperors as had made themselves obnoxious to the orthodox party. But this flippancy of language proves nothing but the passion of the men who indulged themselves in it, unless it be, that this term of reproach was thought better suited to an ecclesiastic, than a civil power: for the Emperor, being now the head of the Christian church, his persecutions of the faith were deemed the more *Antichristian*, as they especially disgraced his *religious character*. And how natural this idea was, I mean the idea of *Antichrist*, as intended by the prophets of a *religious*, not civil power, we may learn from the history of the schisms, which afterwards distracted the church under the papacy; when the Antipopes very liberally, and constantly branded each other with the name of *Antichrist*: as if they had found a peculiar aptness in the prophetic language to express ecclesiastical tyranny and usurpation.

But, whatever use we may make of these facts, it is clear, on all hands, that the Roman Emperor, *as such*, was thought to have no concern in the predictions concerning Antichrist; at least, that the more intelligent Christian writers of the three first centuries had no idea of his having any such concern in them: while, yet, they held very unanimously, that some future power was to arise in the church, in which those predictions would be completed.

II. This, in general, was the state of the controversy concerning Antichrist, till the down-fall of the Western empire; when the Bishop of Rome reared his head, and by degrees found means, amidst the ruins of that mighty power, to advance himself into the sovereignty of Rome, and, at length, of the Christian world: fixing his residence in the very seat and throne of the Cæsars. It remains to see, in what light the reign of Antichrist was, thenceforth, considered by many eminent members of that church, which now called itself, and was, in a manner, *universal*. In other words, we are to inquire, now that the imperial power, which the fathers would not acknowledge to be Antichristian, had deserted Rome, whether the papal power, which took

SERMON VII.

its place on *the seven hills*, did not, in the opinion of sober men, fill up all the measures of the prophetic characters, and perfectly correspond to that idea.

1. So early, as about the close of the sixth century, Gregory the first, or, the *Great*, as he is usually called, the most revered, and in some respects not undeservedly so, of all the Roman pontifs, in a famous dispute with the Bishop of Constantinople, who had taken to himself the title of *Oecumenical*, or Universal Bishop, objects to him, the arrogance and presumption of this claim, and treats him, on that account, as the fore-runner, at least, of Antichrist. His words are remarkable enough to be here quoted. *I affirm it confidently*, says He, *that whoever calls himself Universal Bishop, or is desirous to be so called, demonstrates himself, by this pride and elation of heart, to be the fore-runner of Antichrist*[k]. And, again, *From this presumption of his* [in taking the name of Universal Bishop] *what else can be collected, but that the times of Antichrist are now at hand*[l]*?*

[k] Quisquis se universalem vocat, vel vocari desiderat, in elatione suâ Antichristum præcurrit. GREG. M. Op. Ep. xxx. l. vi. *Par.* 1533.

[l] In hâc ejus superbiâ, quid aliud nisi propinqua jam Antichristi esse tempora designatur? Ep. xxxiv. l. iv.

SERMON VII.

It is to be observed of this Gregory, that he disclaimed, for himself, the title of Universal Bishop, as well as refused it to his aspiring brother of Constantinople. How consistently he did this, when at the same time, he exercised an authority, which can only belong to that exalted character, it is not my business to inquire. Perhaps, he did not advert to the consequence of his own actions: perhaps, like an able man, he meant to secure the thing, without troubling himself about the name: perhaps, he was jealous of a rival to this claim of catholic authority, and would not permit the Bishop of Constantinople to decorate himself with a title, which was likely to be favourable to the pretensions of that see, and injurious to his own. Whatever the reasons of his conduct were, the *fact* is, as I here represent it; and clearly shews that, in the judgment of this renowned Roman Bishop, Antichrist had not yet been revealed in the person of the Roman Emperor; and if ever he were to be revealed, that not a civil, but ecclesiastical character, agreed best with the prophetic descriptions of him [m].

[m] With all his merits, Gregory the Great, it is to be feared, had some Antichristian marks upon him; and his adversary of the East might have gone some way towards *fixing* them upon his *Grandeur*, if he had but observed,

SERMON VII.

2. Pope Boniface III. had not, it seems, the scruples, whatever they were, of his predecessor, Gregory. He readily accepted, or rather importunately begged, this proud title of *Oecumenical Bishop*, from the Emperor, Phocas; and transmitted it to all his successors. And now, it might be expected, that the Bishop of Rome would be Antichrist, in his turn. But, such was the fortune of that see, or the devotion of the faithful to it, that this charge was not presently brought against him: as if the spirit of dominion, which had so long possessed that city, were a thing of course, and could not misbecome the Bishop of Rome, though it looked so *Antichristian* in him of Constantinople.

Other reasons concurred to save the honour of the papal chair. Its authority grew, every day, more absolute: and the tradition of the church (which had hitherto been the chief support of the doctrine concerning Antichrist) gradually sunk under the apprehension of that power, to which alone it could, with any apparent propriety, be applied: while the ignorance of the times became such, that, except

that Antichrist, whoever he was, and whensoever to appear in the world, is clearly marked out in the prophecies, as having his seat in *old Rome*.

perhaps in the minds of some few retainers to the see of Rome, there was scarce light enough left in the Christian world to point out the meaning of the prophecies; if its gross superstition would have otherwise permitted the application of them to the sacred person of the Pope.

3. Under the cover of all these advantages, *the Man of Sin* had a convenient time to display himself, and to grow up into that full size and stature, in which he could no longer be overlooked, or mistaken, by those who had any knowledge of the prophecies, or skill in applying them. Accordingly we find that at the synod of Rheims, held in the Xth century [n], Arnulphus, Bishop of Orleans, appealed to the whole council, whether the Bishop of Rome were not the Antichrist of the prophets; *sitting in the temple of God;* and perfectly corresponding to the marks, which St. Paul had given of him. In particular, speaking of John the XVth, who then governed the church of Rome, he apostrophized the assembly in these words—"What think ye, reverend Fathers, of this man, seated on a lofty throne, and shining in purple and gold?

[n] A. 991.

SERMON VII.

Whom do ye account him to be? Surely, if destitute of charity, and puffed up with the pride of science only, He is ANTICHRIST, *sitting in the temple of God, and shewing himself that he is God*[o]."

4. In the former part of the XIth century, Berengarius, a man of principal note in those days, and distinguished by his free writings concerning the Eucharist, went so far as to call the church of Rome, *the seat of Satan* (which is but another apocalyptic name of Antichrist); and to know from what source he derived this language, we need only reflect, that, in the catalogue of his works, we find a treatise written by him expressly on the book of Revelations[p].

[o] Quid hunc, reverendi patres, in sublimi solio residentem, veste purpureâ et aureâ radiantem; quid hunc, inquam, esse censetis? Nimirum, si charitate destituitur, solâque scientiâ inflatur et extollitur, ANTICHRISTUS est, *in templo Dei sedens, et se ostendens tanquam sit Deus.* USSER. *de Christian. Eccl. successione & statu,* c. ii. p. 36. Lond. 1613. — ILLYRICI *Cat. Test. Ver.* p. 1558. *Officin. Jacob. Stoër et Jacob. Chouël.* — This Arnulph, Bishop of Orleans, was esteemed, in his day, the wisest and most eloquent of all the Gallican prelates. Arnulphus — de quo sic initio ejus synodi scriptum est — *Inter omnes Galliarum episcopos sapientiâ et eloquentiâ clarissimus habebatur.* Ib.

[p] "Ecclesiam vanitatis, & SEDEM SATANÆ vocabat."

As this century advanced, the papal power rose to its height. And all the characters of Antichrist glared so strongly in the person of Hildebrand, who took the name of Gregory VIIth, that the Romish historian, Joannes Aventinus, speaks of it as a point, *in which the generality of fair, candid, and ingenuous writers, were agreed, That* THEN *began the empire of Antichrist* [q].

5. Pascal II, who had been brought up at the feet of Hildebrand, and sate upon the papal throne in the beginning of the XIIth century, was treated with as little ceremony, as his master had been; particularly, by Fluentius, Bishop of Florence, and by the whole church of Liege [r].

St. Bernard, too, the most eminent person of that age, was so struck with the marks of

USSER. *de Christian. Eccl. succes. & statu,* c. 7. s. xxiv. p. 196.— In Apocalypsin scripsisse testatur Bostonius Buriensis. CAVE, H. L. vol. ii. p. 131. *Oxon.* 1743.

[q] Plerique omnes boni, aperti, justi, ingenui, simplices, tum imperium Antichristi cœpisse, quod ea quæ Christus servator noster tot annos ante nobis cantavit, evenisse eo tempore cernebant, memoriæ literarum prodidêre. ANNAL. BOIORUM, l. v. p. 591. Ingolstad. 1554.

[r] CAVE, H. L. vol. ii. p. 258. Conc. Flor. 1101. USSER. *De Christ. Eccl. succ. & stat.* c. v. s. v. p. 109.

SERMON VII.

Antichristianism in the church of Rome (to which, however, in other respects, he was enough devoted) that he employed all the thunder of his rhetoric (in which faculty he excelled) against its corruptions; exclaiming, *that the ministers of Christ were become the servants of Antichrist; and that the beast of the Apocalypse had seated himself in the chair of St. Peter*[s].

[s] MINISTRI CHRISTI SUNT, ET SERVIUNT ANTICHRISTO [*Serm. sup. Cantic.* xxxiii.] — It is true, by Antichrist, he seems not to mean the Pope, but, in general, an evil principle, which then domineered in the church. Yet he refers us to the famous passage in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, ch. ii. And he tells us in his 56th epistle, that he had heard one Norbert, a man of exemplary piety, say, That Antichrist would be revealed in that age. Hence it seems probable, that some one person or power was in his eye. After all, he says, that Norbert's reasons did not satisfy him. Yet, in another epistle, he asserts expressly — Bestia illa de Apocalypsi, cui datum est os loquens blasphemias, et bellum gerere cum sanctis, PETRI CATHEDRAM OCCUPAT, tanquam leo paratus ad prædam. Ep. CXXV: which was, in other words, to call the Pope, Antichrist. It is evident that St. Bernard applied the prophecies in the Revelation to the successor of St. Peter. — I mention these things so particularly, to shew, what his sentiments on this head really were; which have been misrepresented by hasty writers, who transcribe from each other, without examining, themselves, the authorities, they quote.

But this charge was now so general, and sounded so high, that it reached the ears of *others*, besides prelates, and churchmen. Historians relate, that it made an impression on our military king, Richard I.; who, being at Messina in Sicily, in his way to the Holy Land, and hearing much of the learned Abbot Joachim of Calabria, (a man, famous in those times for his warm invectives against the Roman hierarchy;) had the curiosity to take a lecture from him on this subject. His text was, *Antichrist*, and the *Apocalypse;* which he explained in so pointed and forcible a manner, as was much to the satisfaction, we are told, of his royal auditor [t].

6. The first appearance of the people, called Waldenses or Albigenses, was in this age;

[t] CAVE, H. L. v. ii. p. 278. ROG. DE HOVEDEN, ANNAL. *Pars Post.* p. 681. Ed. Franc. 1601.—In this age [XIIth], was composed a very remarkable tract on the subject of Antichrist, which may be seen in Mede's Works, p. 721.—Mr. Mede supposes, and seems indeed to have proved, that the *true* doctrine of Antichrist was, and was intended to be, a mystery, or secret, till the 12th century. Whence it follows that the testimonies, hitherto alledged, are only passionate or declamatory exaggerations, or to be esteemed, as he says, *pro parabolicè et κάτ' αὔξησιν dictis, declamatorum more. Works*, p. 722.

I admit the truth of the observation: but hold, that the

SERMON VII.

but, in the next, the XIIIth century, they prevailed to that degree, that Crusades and Inquisitions were thought little enough to be employed against them. We may know what the guilt of this people was, when we understand from their books, and from the testimony of the great historian, Thuanus, that a leading principle of their heresy was, To treat the Pope as *Antichrist*; and the church of Rome, as *Babylon*; on the authority of the prophecies contained in the Revelation [u].

use of the deduction, here made, is not in the least affected by it. For my purpose in giving this catalogue of witnesses to the doctrine of Antichrist, was not to *justify* that doctrine, in the *true*, that is, Protestant sense of it (for then, not only the preceding testimonies, but even some of the following, would have been omitted) but merely to shew that the general, at least, and confused idea of some such doctrine did, in fact, *subsist* in the ancient Christian church. That what idea they had of this doctrine was founded on the *prophecies*, is clear from the terms in which they express themselves. And, though the doctrine itself was very imperfectly conceived, and inconsequentially applied by them, still their language shews that they had some notion of *a corrupt spiritual power, which was*, in their sense of the prophets, *to domineer in the church of Rome:* whence I draw this conclusion (for the sake of which, this whole deduction is made), That the present application of the prophecies concerning Antichrist to papal Rome, is not wholly new and unauthorized; as the prejudice, I am here combating, supposeth it to be.

[u] VITRINGA in Apoc. p. 747. Amst. 1719. USSER.

Other [v] testimonies occur in the history of this age. But I must not omit that of our famous historian, Matthew Paris; who hath taken care to inform us, that his contemporary, Robert Grostête, Bishop of Lincoln, the most considerable of all the English bishops, and equally renowned for his affection to civil and religious liberty, was so much in earnest in fixing this charge on the see of Rome, that, as it had been the common theme of his medita-

De Eccl. succ. & stat. c. 6 and 8. THUANUS, l. vi. s. 16. vol. i. p. 221. Ed. Buckley.

[v] See, especially, the famous speech of Everhard, bishop of Saltzbourg, at the assembly of Ratisbonne, in the time of Gregory the IXth; inserted at large in Aventinus, *Ann. Boior.* l. vii. p. 684. The following extracts from it will be thought curious. Hildebrandus ante annos centum atque septuaginta primus specie religionis *Antichristi* imperii fundamenta jecit, p. 684.

Flamines illi *Babyloniæ* [meaning the Bishops of Rome] soli regnare cupiunt, ferre parem non possunt, non desistent donec omnia pedibus suis conculcaverint, atque *in templo Dei sedeant, extollanturque supra omne id, quod colitur.* Ib.

Nova consilia sub pectore volutat, ut proprium sibi constituat imperium, *leges commutat,* suas sancit; contaminat, diripit, spoliat, fraudat, occidit, perditus homo ille *(quem Antichristum vocare solent)* in cujus fronte *contumeliæ nomen* scriptum est, "Deus sum, errare non possum," *in templo Dei sedet,* longè latéque dominatur. *Ib.*

— *Reges decem pariter existunt* — *Decem Cornua* — *Cornuque parvulum* — Quid hâc prophetiâ apertius? p. 685.

SERMON VII.

tions during life, so it occupied his dying moments; the *Pope*, and *Antichrist*, being, as he tells us, among the last words of this zealous prelate [w].

7. The XIVth century affords many authorities in point; among which the immortal names of Dante [x] and Petrarch [y] are commonly

[w] MATTH. PARIS, ad ann. 1253. p. 874. ed. Watts, 1640.

[x] Purgat. 32.

[y] Epistolarum sine titulo Liber. Ep. xvi. p. 130. Basil. 1581.—Many strokes in this epistle are, to the last degree, severe and caustic. Addressing himself to Rome, "Illa equidem ipsa es, says he, quam in spiritu sacer vidit Evangelista.—Populi et gentes et linguæ, aquæ sunt super quas meretrix sedes; recognosce habitum. Mulier circumdata purpurâ, et coccino, et inaurata auro, et lapide pretioso, et margaritis, habens poculum aureum in manu suâ, plenum abominatione et immunditiâ fornicationis ejus.—Audi reliqua. Et vidi (inquit) mulierem ebriam de sanguine sanctorum, et de sanguine martyrum Jesu. Quid siles?"—And so goes on to apply the prophecies of the Revelation to the church of Rome, in terms that furnish out a good comment on the famous verse in one of his poems—

Gia Roma, 'hor Babylonia false è ria—

Numberless passages in the writings of Petrarch speak of Rome, under the name of *Babylon*. But an equal stress is not to be laid on all of these. It should be remembered, that the Popes, in Petrarch's time, resided at Avignon; greatly to the disparagement of themselves, as he thought,

cited. But the example of our Wicklif, who adorned that age, is most to our purpose, and may excuse the mention of any other. This extraordinary man saw far into all the abuses of his time: but he had nothing more at heart, than to expose the *Antichristianism* of the Roman Pontif[z].

8. Still, as the times grew more enlightened, the controversy concerning Antichrist became more general and important. The writings of

and especially of Rome; of which this singular man was little less than idolatrous. The situation of the place, surrounded by waters, and his splenetic concern for the *exiled* Church (for under this idea, he painted to himself the Pope's migration to the banks of Avignon) brought to his mind the condition of the Jewish church in the Babylonian captivity. And this parallel was all, perhaps, that he meant to insinuate in most of those passages. But, when he applies the prophecies to Rome, as to the *Apocalyptic* Babylon (as he clearly does in the epistle under consideration) his meaning is not equivocal: and we do him but justice to give him an honourable place among the TESTES VERITATIS.

[z] See the catalogue of his works in Cave's Hist. Lit. vol. ii. App. p. 63; in which is the following book of Dialogues. Dialogorum libri quatuor; quorum — quartus Romanæ Ecclesiæ sacramenta, ejus pestiferam vocationem, ANTICHRISTI REGNUM, fratrum fraudulentam originem atque eorum hypocrisim, variaque nostro ævo scitu dignissima, perstringit.

SERMON VII.

Wicklif had great effects both at home, and abroad; and, with other causes, contributed very much to the cultivation of free enquiry, and to the improvement of all useful knowledge, in the XVth century. The church of Rome was pushed vigorously on all sides; and, in her turn, omitted no means of self-defence. That the *worst* were not scrupled, may be seen by what passed in England at that time, as well as by the sanguinary and faithless proceedings at the council of Constance. Lord Cobham, and the two Bohemian martyrs, were committed to the flames, for nothing so much, as for asserting the impious doctrine, 'That the Pope was Antichrist.'

9. We now enter on the XVIth century; distinguished in the annals of mankind by that great event, The Reformation of long oppressed and much adulterated religion. The Christian world had slumbered in its chains, for full ten ages. But Liberty came at last —

Libertas, quæ sera tamen respexit INERTEM.

This important work was begun, and prosecuted, on the common principle, That the bishop of Rome was Antichrist: and the great separation from the church of Rome, was every

where justified on the idea, That Rome was the Babylon of the Revelation; and that Christians were bound by an express command in those prophecies, to *come out of her* communion.

Leo X. was thunder-struck with this cry, which resounded on all sides; and, in the last Lateran council, gave it in charge to all preachers, that none of them should presume to call the Pope, Antichrist, or to treat this obnoxious subject in their discourses to the people[a]. But his edict came too late. The notion had taken deep root in the minds of men; and the name of Antichrist, as applied to the Pope, was current in all quarters.

10. From this time to the present, *the charge of Antichristianism* against the church of Rome is to be regarded, not as the language of private men, or particular synods; but as the common voice of the whole Protestant world: so that it will be needless to bring down the history of it any lower.

[a] Mandantes omnibus, &c. — *tempus quoque præfixum futurorum malorum, vel* ANTICHRISTI ADVENTUM — *prædicare, vel asserere, nequaquam præsumant.* BIN. CONC. *Lateran.* v. *sub Leone* X. *Sess.* xi. *p.* 632.

SERMON VII.

THIS DEDUCTION, though made with all possible brevity, hath held us so long, that I have but time for one or two short reflexions upon it.

1. *First*, It may seem probable from the general prevalence of this opinion, in all the periods of the Christian church, that it must needs have some solid ground in the scriptural prophecies: it not being otherwise conceivable, that it should spread so far, and continue so long; or that the more enlightened, as well as barbarous ages should concur in the profession of it.

2. *Secondly*, from the catalogue of illustrious names, here produced, and from the singular stress, which all Protestant churches to this day have ever laid on this principle, we may see the importance of the general question. The papal divines have an evident reason for treating it with contempt. The men of thought and inquiry, who speculate within the Roman communion, may be restrained by considerations of fear or decency, from joining [b]

[b] M. d'Alembert, indeed, goes further. He acquaints us, that this *charge* is now out of date, and that nobody, either within or without the Romish communion, makes it any longer. For, speaking of a public inscription at

in this invidious charge against the head of their church. But for any, that profess Christianity, and call themselves Protestants, to make light of inquiries into the prophecies concerning Antichrist, and to manifest a scorn of all attempts to apply them in the way, in which they have so generally, and with such effect been applied, is a sort of conduct, which will not so readily find an excuse, much less a justification.

3. *Lastly*, whatever becomes of the *truth*, or *importance* of the doctrine, the *antiquity* of it is not to be disputed. For we are authorised

Geneva, in which *the Pope is called Antichrist*, he animadverts on this disgrace of that Protestant people, and very kindly suggests to them what their improved sentiments and language should be on that subject. *As for the Catholics* (says he, very gravely,) *the Pope is regarded by them, as the Head of the true Church: By sage and moderate Protestants, he is seen in the light of a sovereign prince, whom they respect, though they do not obey him: But, in an age like this,* HE IS NO LONGER ANTICHRIST IN THE OPINION OF ANYBODY. "Pour les Catholiques, le Pape est le chef de la veritable Eglise; pour les Protestants sages & modérés, c'est un Souverein qu'ils respectent comme Prince sans lui obéir: *mais dans un siécle tel que nôtre, il n'est plus l'Antichrist pour personne.*" Encyclopedie, Art. GENEVE.—If the present age be, here, truly characterized, it was high time, or rather it was too late, to found this Protestant Lecture.

SERMON VII.

to affirm, on the most certain grounds of history, that a Roman power, commonly called Antichrist, was expected to arise in *the latter times*, by the primitive Christians; and that the Imperial, was not deemed to be that power, so long as it subsisted. It is, further, unquestionable that not the Emperor, but the Bishop or Church of Rome, was afterwards thought entitled to the name of Antichrist by many persons of that communion, for several successive centuries, previous to the æra of the Reformation.

These facts should abate the wonder, at least, which some express at hearing the names of the *Pope* and *Antichrist* pronounced together. They must surely convince every man, that this language, whatever foundation it may, or may not have, in the prophecies, is not taken up without precedents and authorities; and that the notion, conveyed by it, is not a conceit of yesterday, which sprung out of recent prejudices, and novel interpretations. This, I say, is a conclusion which every man must draw from the premises, laid down in this discourse: and this, for the present, is the main use I would request you to make of those premises.

SERMON VIII.

PREJUDICES AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF ANTICHRIST.

1 Ep. John ii. 18.

— Ye have heared that Antichrist shall come —

ONE of the principal prejudices against the doctrine of Antichrist, as understood and applied by Protestant divines, arises out of a circumstance, which was just touched in the close of my last discourse, and is of importance enough to be now resumed and more particularly considered.

I. It is well known that, when the Reformation was set on foot in the sixteenth cen-

SERMON VIII.

tury, this great work was every where justified and conducted on the general principle, "That the Pope, or at least the church of Rome, was Antichrist."

"Now men of sense, who have looked no farther into the subject, and yet remember, as they easily may, the bitterness, the policy, the fraud, too commonly observable in the conduct of religious (as of other) parties, easily fall into the suspicion, That this cry of Antichrist was only an artifice of the time, or at least an extravagance of it; when the minds of men were intensely heated against each other, and when of course no arms would be refused, that might serve to annoy or distress the enemy.

In these circumstances, it was natural enough, it will be said, for angry men to *see* that in the prophecies which was not contained in them; or for designing men to *feign* that which they did not see; in order the more effectually to carry on the cause in which they had embarked, and to seduce the unwary multitude into their quarrel. In short, the passions of the Reformed, it is readily presumed, had, some way or other, conjured up this spectre of Antichrist, as a convenient engine, by which they might either gratify their own spleen, or

excite that of the people; the prophecies all the while being no further concerned in the question, than as they were wrested for these purposes (as they frequently have been, in like cases) from their true and proper meaning."

To remove this capital prejudice (which, more than any other, hath, perhaps, diverted serious men from giving a due attention to this argument) was the main purpose of the preceding discourse; in which it was clearly shewn from historical testimony, that the question concerning Antichrist had its rise in the earliest times; that the prophecies concerning Antichrist, though imperfectly enough understood, and, it may be, passionately applied, had yet, been considered, very generally, as referring to *some* corrupt Christian and even ecclesiastical person or power; and that many eminent members of the Christian church had even applied those prophecies to the *same* person or power. to which Protestants now apply them, and for the *same* end, which Protestants have in view, when they apply them to such person or power, for many successive centuries, before the Reformation began. From all which it is undeniable, that the Reformers did not innovate in the interpretation of the prophecies concerning Antichrist; and that their application

SERMON VIII.

of them to the see of Rome, was not a contrivance, which sprung out of the passionate resentments, or interested policies of that time.

It is true indeed (for the truth should not, and needs not be concealed) that the Reformers were forward enough to lay hold on this received sense of the prophecies, and to make their utmost advantage of it; the account of which matter is, briefly, this: The Christian church had now for many ages been held together in a close dependence on the chair of St. Peter; and to secure and perpetuate that dependence, was the principal object and concern of the papal court. Various means were employed for this purpose; but the most effectual was thought to be, to inculcate in the strongest terms on the minds of Christians the absolute necessity of communicating with the Bishop of Rome, as the centre of unity, and, by divine appointment, the supreme visible head of the Christian world. Hence, to renounce in any degree the authority and jurisdiction of Rome, was deemed the most inexpiable of all sins. The name of SCHISM was fastened upon it; a name, which was sounded higher than that of Heresy itself, as implying in it the accumulated guilt of Apostacy, and Infidelity. The way of heaven was shut against

all offenders of this sort; and, to make their condition as miserable, as it was hopeless, all the engines of persecution, such as racks, fires, gibbets, inquisitions, and even Crusades, had been employed against them: as was seen in the case of the Albigenses and others, who, at different times, had attempted to withdraw themselves from the papal dominion.

Such was the state of things, when the bold spirit of Luther resolved, at all adventures, to break through this inveterate servitude[a], so dextrously imposed on the Christian world, under the pretence, and in the name, of ecclesiastical union. Yet the peril of the attempt was easily foreseen, or was presently felt. And, therefore, the Reformers (to prevent the ill effects which the dreadful name of *Schism* might have on themselves and their cause, and to satisfy at once their own consciences and those of their adherents) not only revived and enforced the old charge of *Antichristianism* against the church of Rome; but further insisted (on the authority of those prophecies which justified the charge) that Christians were bound in conscience, by the most express com-

[a] Rompons leurs liens, dit-il, et rejettons leur joug de dessus nos têtes. *Bossuet, H. V.* l. i. c. 26.

SERMON VIII.

mand, to break all communion with her. The expedient, one sees, was well calculated to serve the purpose in hand: but still the command was truly and pertinently alledged; for it exists in so many words (however the blindness or the bigotry of former times had overlooked it) in the book of the *Revelations*[b]. So that whoever admitted the *charge* itself to be well founded, could not reject this *consequence* of it, That Christ and Antichrist had no fellowship with each other. And on this popular ground, chiefly, the Protestant cause, in those early times, was upheld; with no small advantage to the patrons of it; it being now clear, that the invidious imputation of Schism had lost its malignity in the general obligation, which lay upon Christians, to renounce all communion with the church of Rome.

This being the true account of that zeal, with which the doctrine of Antichrist was asserted in the days of Reformation, let us see how the case stands at present; and whether any reasonable prejudice lies against the doc-

[b] *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.* Rev. xviii. 4.

trine itself, from the uses, that were then so happily made of it.

In the first place, The injunction, *to come out of her*, was, as I observed, not forged by the Reformers; nor (admitting that church to be Antichristian) was it misrepresented by them. Every reader of the prophecies must confess, that the command is clearly delivered, and that the sense of it is not mistaken. How serviceable soever, therefore, this topic was to the cause of reformation, it is not, on that account, to be the less esteemed by the just and candid inquirer.

In the next place, I will freely admit, that the dread, in which most men, if not all men [c],

[c] Il [Luther] condamnoit les Bohemiens qui s'etoient separez de nôtre communion, et protestoit qu'il ne lui arriveroit jamais de tomber dans *un semblable Schisme*. *Bossuet, Hist. des Variat.* l. i. p. 21. *Par.* 1740. And again, p. 28; Apres, dit-il [Luther,] que j'eus surmonté tous les argumens qu'on proposoit, il en restoit un dernier qu'à peine je pus surmonter par le secours de Jesus Christ avec une extrême difficulté & beaucoup d'angoisse; *c'est qu'il falloit écouter l'Eglise.* — One sees for what purpose M. Bossuet quotes these passages, and others of the same kind, from the writings of Luther. However, they shew very clearly how deep an impression the idea of Schism had made on the mind even of this intrepid Reformer.

SERMON VIII.

of that time, were held, of incurring the imputation of Schism, was much greater, than the occasion required, and, upon the whole, a sort of panic terror. For, though a causeless separation from the church would indeed have loaded the Reformers with much and real guilt, yet when the abuses of it had risen to that height as to reduce an honest man to the alternative, either of committing sin, or of leaving its communion, they might well have justified themselves on the evident necessity of the thing, and had no need of a positive command to authorize their separation. All this is, now, clearly seen; and if the first Reformers did not see thus much (as very probably they did not) all that follows is, That the doctrine of Antichrist, from which that command derived its effect, was less necessary to their cause, than they supposed it to be; not, that the doctrine itself is without authority, or the command without obligation.

Lastly, I observe, that, though the *violences* of the time might force the Reformers to take shelter in this doctrine of Antichrist, and though the *prejudices* of the time might induce them to take the advantage, they did, of it; yet, neither of these considerations affords any

just presumption against the doctrine, as it lies in scripture, and is enforced by us at this time out of it; because we argue, not from their authority, but from the prophecies themselves; which are much better understood by us, than they were by them; and are still maintained to speak the sense, which they put upon them, I mean with respect to the general application of them to the church of Rome, though we have nothing to apprehend either from the power of that church, or from the prejudices of the people.

Let no man, therefore, rashly conclude, from the free use made of this doctrine by our old Reformers (and there is scarce one of them that has not left behind him a tract or discourse on Antichrist) that it hath no better or other foundation, than in their interests or passions. A reasonable man sees, that it has no dependance at all upon them. That Luther, indeed, heated in the controversy with the church of Rome, and smoaking, as I may say, from the recent blast of the papal thunders, should cry out, ANTICHRIST[d], shall pass, if

[d] *Contra Bullam Antichristi*—a tract of Luther, so called, against the Bull of Leo X.

SERMON VIII.

you will, for a sally of rage and desperation[e]. But that we, at this day, who revolve the prophecies at our ease, and are in little more dread of modern Rome, than of ancient Babylon, should still find the resemblance so striking as to fall upon the same idea; and should even be driven against the strong bias of prejudice (which with us, in England, for above a century past, has drawn the other way) to adopt the language of our great Reformer; this, I say, is a consideration of another sort, and will not be put off so slightly.

STILL, there are other prejudices, which oppose themselves to this great Protestant principle, *That the Pope is Antichrist;* and these, it will not be beside the purpose of this Lecture to consider. It may, then, be said,

II. "That, although there be not the same evident necessity for bringing this odious charge against the Papacy, as there was formerly in the infancy of Reformation, yet obvious reasons are not wanting, which may possibly induce the Protestant churches of our times to repeat and inforce it. So long as the

[e] Luther reconnoit après la rupture ouverte, que dans les commencemens il étoit *comme au desespoir*—

Bossuet, H. V. c. 26.

separation is kept up, the partizans of the cause will not scruple to lay hold on every popular topic, by which it may be promoted. But an *ill name*, is the readiest of all expedients, and generally the most effectual, for this service. And as *Heretic* is the term in use, when the church of Rome would discredit the Reformation; so, *Antichrist* serves just as well, in the mouth of a Protestant, to disgrace the Catholic party. Hence, the people are gratified in a low spite against the person of the Pope; the better sort are confirmed in their religious or politic aversion to the church of Rome; and Princes themselves are invited to come in aid of the prophecies, by turning their arms and councils against a godless antichristian tyranny: and all this, to the ruin of public peace, and in defiance of Christian charity."

When men declaim, instead of arguing, or, what is worse, when they argue from their suspicions only, it may not be easy to give them an answer to their satisfaction. Otherwise, one might reply,

First, That the question is not, what use has been, or may be, made of this doctrine concerning Antichrist; but whether there be reason to believe that such doctrine is really contained in sacred scripture. If there be, it

SERMON VIII.

will become us to treat it with respect, how much soever it may have been misapplied, or perverted.

In the *next place*, one might observe that no man, who understood the state of this controversy, ever applied the prophecies concerning Antichrist to the *person* of the Pope, but in general to the church of Rome, or rather to the Antichristian spirit, by which it is governed; or, if to the *Pope*, to him only as representing that society, of which he is the head; and so far only, as he acted in the spirit of it. And there is nothing strange or unusual in this use of the term. When Hobbes wrote his famous book, called LEVIATHAN (a word, now at least, of almost as ill sound, as Antichrist itself) no man supposes, that he meant to apply this character, exclusively, to the person of any prince, then living; but, in general, to *civil government*, according to the ideas he had formed of it. And this way of speaking, as I have before observed, is especially familiar to the sacred writers. Many of the Popes are said to have been, and, for any thing I know, *may* have been, *Saints*, in their private morals: so that when we apply the term, Antichrist, to them, we do not mean to stigmatize their *persons*, but merely to express the sense which the prophecies lead us to

entertain of the communion, over which they preside; though they may not exemplify in their own conduct, or not in any remarkable degree, the avowed principles of that communion.

Conceive, therefore, with more respect of Protestant divines, when they explain and vindicate the prophecies concerning Antichrist, than to suppose, that they indulge in themselves, or would encourage in others, *a low spite against the person of the Roman Pontif.*

Thirdly, It is to be observed, that, although this prophetic language may tend to confirm Protestants *in a religious, or*, if you will, *politic aversion to the church of Rome;* yet it is not therefore to be forborn, if the scriptures do, indeed, authorize the use of it; nor is there any hurt done, if the principles of that church be not misrepresented; for then, such aversion becomes the wisdom and the duty of all Christians. Besides, this aversion proceeds no farther in well-informed Protestants, than to keep them at distance from the Romish communion, and to admonish others of their obligation to forsake it. And, if the members, above all, if the rulers, of that communion would restrain *their* zeal within the same bounds (though they

SERMON VIII.

would not, we say, be equally justified in this zeal) neither public peace, nor Christian charity, would suffer by it.

Lastly, it should be remembered, That, when the prophecies foretell the downfall of Antichrist, and even go so far as to point out to us the princes of that communion, as the destined instruments of such catastrophe; yet neither is hereby any duty imposed on those princes to make war upon the Pope, nor any encouragement given to Protestants themselves to concur in any such measures. For the prophets simply predict an *event;* and do not deliver in their prediction, or propose to deliver, *rules* for our conduct. Our Saviour himself, speaking by the spirit, and in the language of prophecy, said — *I come not to send peace on earth, but a sword.* But will any man suppose that this prediction justifies, or was meant in any degree to justify, that state of things, which it describes, and which the author of it foresaw would too certainly come to pass? Nor think, that the event predicted, I mean, *the fall of Antichrist*, will not take place, unless our invectives, or hostile attempts, make way for it. If the prediction be divine, there is ONE, who will see that it be accomplished. Princes and States may have

nothing less in view than to fulfill the prophecies of sacred Scripture: yet, when the appointed time is come, they will certainly fulfill them, though they never thought *of coming in aid of the prophecies* — though we should not encourage them in any such presumptuous design — nay, though we should do our utmost, as it is our duty to do, to restrain vindictive and ill-advised men from turning their arms even against Antichrist himself, for the sake of religion.

This topic, I know, is much laboured by the advocates of the papal cause, in order to throw disgrace on Protestant writers, whom they consider as so many incendiaries, wickedly attempting to spread the flames of war through Christian societies. There might be a time when, in the case of some few men, transported by passion, because outrageously oppressed, there was, perhaps, some colour for this charge. But to persist in it, as they still do, only shews that they neither conceive with due reverence of divine prophecy, nor do justice to that spirit of toleration by which the Protestant churches, at least of our days, are so eminently distinguished.

III. "A *third* prejudice, which operates in the minds of many persons against the princi-

SERMON VIII.

ple under consideration, arises from the disagreeing opinions of learned men concerning the sense and application of the prophecies; while not only the papal Divines, but many writers of note even among ourselves, have strenuously maintained that the church of Rome is no way concerned in the predictions concerning Antichrist."

To obviate this prejudice, I observe,

1. That arguments from authority, in all cases where reason and good sense must finally decide, are very little to be regarded. Shew me the question in religion, or even in common morals, about which learned men have not disagreed; nay, shew me a single text of scripture, though ever so plain and precise, which the perverseness or ingenuity of interpreters has not drawn into different, and often contrary meanings. What then shall we conclude? That there is no truth in religion, no certainty in morals, no authority in sacred scripture? If such conclusions, as these, be carried to their utmost length, in what else can they terminate, but absolute universal scepticism?

2. I observe that this authority, after all, whatever weight we may, in the general, sup-

pose it to have, is, in the present case, no great matter; for it is, in effect, but the authority of ONE man, whose eminent worth, however, and lustre of reputation, made it current with some others.

The character of HUGO GROTIUS is well known. He is justly esteemed among the ablest and most learned men of an age, that abounded in ability and learning. Besides his other shining talents, his acquaintance with history was extensive; and his knowledge of scripture, profound. And yet, with two such requisites for unlocking the true sense of the prophetic writings, this excellent man undertook to prove in form, *That the Pope was not Antichrist.*

The account of this mischance, is as extraordinary, as the mischance itself. The moral qualities of Grotius were still more admirable, than his intellectual: and in these qualities, we shall find the true spring of his unhappy and misapplied pains on the subject before us.

He was in his own nature just, candid, benevolent, to a supreme degree: and the experience of an active turbulent life had but fortified him the more in a love of these pacific

SERMON VIII.

virtues. He was, on principle, a sincere and zealous Christian; and consequently impressed with a due sense of that exalted charity, which is the characteristic of that religion: but he had seen and felt much of the mischiefs, which proceed from theological quarrels: and thus every thing concurred to make him a friend to peace, and, above all, to peace among Christians.

An union of the Catholic and Protestant churches seemed necessary to this end: and the apparent candour, whether real or affected, of some learned persons, whom he had long known and valued in the church of Rome, drew him into the belief, that such a project was not impracticable. Henceforth, it became the ruling object of his life; and, permitting himself too easily to conclude, that the Protestant doctrine of Antichrist was the sole, or principal obstruction to the union desired, he bent all the efforts of his wit and learning to discredit and overthrow that doctrine.

Thus, was this virtuous man betrayed by the wisdom and equity of his own character; and I know not if the observation of the moral poet can be so justly applied to any other—

Insani sapiens nomen ferat, æquus iniqui,
Ultrà quàm satis est, virtutem si petat ipsam [f].

The issue of his general scheme was what might easily be foreseen: and of his *arguments*, I shall only say thus much, That the Romish writers themselves, for whose use they might seem to be invented, though they continue to object his name to us, are too wise to venture the stress of their cause upon them.

To conclude this head of authority, let me just observe,

3. In the last place, that, if any regard be due to it, the advantage will clearly be on our side. For, though the name of Grotius made an impression on some Protestant interpreters of scripture, not inconsiderable for their parts and learning, yet, when the grounds of his opinion came to be examined, the most and the ablest of them have generally declared against him: and among these, let it be no offence to the manes of this great [g] man, if we particularly

[f] Hor. 1 Ep. vi. 15.

[g] Grotius was more than a great, he was a fashionable man. No wonder therefore that, under the influence of

SERMON VIII.

mention two, and prefer even to his authority that of Newton and Clarke; the one, the ablest philosopher, and the other, the coolest and most rational divine, that any age has produced.

IV. "Another, and *fourth* prejudice may have been entertained on this subject from observing that many curious persons, who have employed themselves much and long in the study of the prophecies, especially of those concerning Antichrist, have been led (on their authority, as they pretend) to fix the time and other circumstances of great events, which yet have not fallen out agreeable to their expectations. Whence it is inferred, that no solid information can be derived from the prophecies, and that all our reasonings upon them are no better than fancy and conjecture."

Now, though the indiscretion of these curious persons, who would needs prophecy when their business was only to interpret[h], be in-

two such prejudices, his opinions should find followers; which yet they would scarce have found with us, if the political state of that time had not been a *third* prejudice in their favour. See the Bishop of Gloucester's Sermon, *On the rise of Antichrist.*

[h] "The folly of interpreters has been, to foretell times

jurious enough to their own character, I do not see how it affects that of the prophets; unless whatever may be abused (as every thing may) be answerable for the abuses made of it. But to reply more directly to this charge.

The ill success of men in explaining prophecies of events, not yet come to pass, can in no degree discredit those prophecies, unless it be essential to this sort of revelation to be so clearly proposed, as that it may and must be perfectly understood, before those events happen; the contrary of which I have already shewn, in a preceding discourse. The very idea of prophecy is that of *a light shining in a dark place*: and a place is not *dark*, if we have light enough to discern distinctly and fully every remote corner of it. But the thing speaks itself. For to what end is the prediction delivered in obscure and enigmatic terms, if the purpose of the inspirer was that the subject of the prediction should be immediately, and in all its circumstances, precisely apprehended? Why, then, is any distinction made between Prophecy, and History? The mode of writing clearly demonstrates, that some-

" and things by this prophecy, as if God designed to make " them prophets." *Sir I. Newton.* p. 251.

SERMON VIII.

thing, for a time at least, was meant to be concealed from us: and then, if men will attempt, out of season, to penetrate this mystery, what wonder if mistake be the fruit of their presumption?

Again: the *declared* end of prophecy is, not that we may be enabled by it to foresee things before they come to pass, but *when* they come to pass, that we may acknowledge the divine author of the prophecy[i]. What dishonour, then, can it be to the prophet, that he is not perfectly understood, till we be expected to make use of his information? Nay, in the case before us, it would dishonour him, if he was. For, of the prophecies concerning Antichrist we are expressly told, that they are *shut up and sealed, till the time of the end;* that is, till Time brings the key along with him. So that, if men could open them, by their own wit and sagacity only, they would give the lye to the prophet. And thus we see, that the very mistakes of interpreters attempting prematurely to unfold the *sealed* prophecies con-

[i] "God gave this, and the prophecies of the Old Testa-"ment, not to gratify men's curiosities by enabling them "to foreknow things; but that, after they were fulfilled, "they might be interpreted by the event; and his own "providence, not the interpreter's, be then manifested "thereby to the world." *Sir I. Newton*, p. 251.

cerning Antichrist, far from subverting, support the credit of those prophecies [k].

But I have something more to say on this subject. Though we cannot see every thing in the prophecies, which we are impatient to see, it is not to be supposed that we can see nothing in them. If this were the case, we should scarce regard them as prophecies at all; at least, we should hardly be prevailed upon to read and consider them. For, it is on the supposition that some *light* is communicated to us, that we are disposed, as well as required, to *take heed to it*. In short, if we saw nothing, we should expect nothing: such prophecies would not engage our curiosity, or so much as take our attention. In one word, they would be utterly lost upon us.

This seems to have been, in some measure, the case with regard to this very book of the *Revelations*. The early Christians saw so little in this prophecy, that they were led by degrees to neglect the study of it. Otherwise, the little they did see, might have given them

k "'Tis a part of this prophecy, that it should not be "understood before the last age of the world; and there- "fore it makes for the credit of the prophecy, that it is "not yet understood." *Sir I. Newton*, p. 251.

SERMON VIII.

a glimpse, at least, of many things, that intimately concerned both their faith and conduct.

It being then necessary, as I said, that prophecy should, from the first, convey some light to us, and time having now very much increased that light, it follows, that men may excuseably employ themselves in studying and contemplating even unfulfilled prophecies. They may conjecture modestly of points which time has not yet revealed: but they should, in no case, pronounce confidently, or decide dogmatically upon them.

It seems therefore to be going too far, to pass an indiscriminate censure on all those, who have proposed their thoughts on the sense of prophecies, not yet completed, though it be ever so clear that a wrong construction has been made of them. Nay, it is worth considering whether they may not even have conjectured right, when they have been thought to mistake the most widely. I say this, chiefly, with regard to the *time*, which some writers have beforehand assigned for the accomplishment of certain prophecies, and that, on principles apparently contained in those prophecies; but so unhappily, as to draw much scorn and ridicule upon themselves.

I explain myself by a famous instance. Nothing has been more censured in Protestant divines, than their temerity in fixing *the fall of Antichrist;* though there are certain data in the prophecies, from which very probable conclusions on that subject may be drawn. Experience, it is said, contradicts their calculation. But it is not considered, that the fall of Antichrist, is not *a single event*, to happen all at once; but *a state of things*, to continue through a long tract of time, and to be gradually accomplished. Hence, the interpretation of the prophecy might be rightly formed, though the expectations of most men are disappointed.

It is visible, I suppose, that the papal power (if we agree to call that, *Antichrist)* is now on the decline; whensoever that declension began, or how long soever it may be, before it will be finished. And therefore interpreters may have aimed right, though they seemed to others, and perhaps to themselves, to be mistaken.

Suppose, the ruin of the Western Empire had been the subject of a prediction, and some had collected, beforehand, from the terms of the prophecy, that it would happen at a *particular* time; when yet nothing more, in fact, came to pass, than *the first irruption of the*

SERMON VIII.

barbarous nations. Would it be certain that this collection was groundless and ill made, because the empire subsisted in a good degree of vigour for some centuries after? Might it not be said, that the empire *was falling* [l] from that æra, or perhaps before; though, in the event, it *fell* not, till its sovereignty was shaken by the rude hands of Attila, or rather, till it was laid flat by the well-directed force of Theodoric?

But we have an instance in point, recorded in sacred scripture. It had been gathered from the old prophecies [m], that, *in the last times,* (that is, when the Messiah was come) *a new earth and new heavens should be created.* The style is symbolical; but the meaning is, and was so understood to be, that a new Law should be given to mankind and prevail over the whole world. This Law was accordingly promulged and began to prevail in the days of the Apostles. Yet there were some who said, *Where is the promise of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue, as they were from the creation of the world.* It

[l] St. Jerom, who lived in this time, speaks in the very terms, here supposed, *Romanus orbis* RUIT. Ep. iii.

[m] Isai. lxv. 17. — 2 Pet. iii. 4. 13.

was taken for granted, we see, that this great and glorious work, equivalent to the production of a new world, would take place suddenly and at once; which not being the case, it seemed to follow, that the prophecies were false, or at least ill understood: when yet, surely, they were then fulfilling under the eyes of these *scoffers*.

It will be considered, how far these hints may go towards rescuing some respectable interpreters (for I speak only of such) from that contempt, which has fallen upon them, and, from them, on the prophecies themselves, for some hazardous conclusions, or, (if you will) predictions, formed and given out by them, concerning the reign and fall of Antichrist. My meaning, however, is not to make myself responsible for these conclusions. They may not be rightly drawn from the premises, laid down; or the premises may be such, that the precise date of those transactions cannot be determined from them, at least, not, till the scene of prophecy be closed, or, in the prophetic language, *till the mystery of God be finished*[n]. In the mean time, it is not clear and undeniable that there is no ground at all for such con-

[n] Rev. x. 7.

SERMON VIII.

jectures: or, if it were, it would only follow that they, who made them, had been rash and indiscreet in commenting too minutely and confidently on prophecies unfulfilled; and it would be weak, as we have seen, to contract a prejudice against the subject itself from the mistakes of such commentators.

V. After all, the main and master prejudice, I doubt, is, that levity of mind which disposes too many to take their notions on this, and other subjects of moment, from certain polite and popular, it may be, but frivolous and libertine writers: men, who have no religion, or not enough to venerate the prophetic scriptures; who have no knowledge, or certainly not enough to understand them.

But with such cavillers, as these, I have no concern; this Lecture, and the subject of it, being addressed to men of another character, to fair, candid, sober, and enlightened inquirers, only: For so the inspired person, who first announced these wonders concerning Antichrist, to mankind, expressly declares, or rather prophesies—*None of the wicked shall understand: but* THE WISE *shall understand*[o].

[o] Daniel xii. 10.

SERMON IX.

THE PROPHETIC STYLE CONSIDERED.

EZEKIEL XX. 49.

— They say of me, Doth he not speak Parables?

IN recounting the various prejudices, which have diverted many persons from giving a due attention to the prophecies concerning Antichrist, I may be thought to have overlooked ONE of the most considerable; which ariseth from *the peculiar style, in which they are delivered.* But this being a subject of larger compass, and nicer inquiry, than the rest, (in which, too, the credit of all the prophetic

SERMON IX.

scriptures, as well as those respecting Antichrist, is concerned) I have purposely reserved it for a distinct and separate examination.

WITHOUT DOUBT, a plain man, brought up in our customs and notions, and unacquainted with theological studies, when he first turns himself to the contemplation of the Jewish and Christian prophecies, will be surprised, perhaps disgusted, to find, that he understands little, or nothing of them. His *modesty* may incline him to think, that such writings are too mysterious for his comprehension: or, his *laziness and presumption* may dispose him to reject them, at once, as perfectly unintelligible; to consider the language of them, as a jargon, to which no ideas are annexed; or, at least, as a kind of cypher, of so wild and fanatical a texture, that no clear and certain construction can be made of it.

Now, this prejudice, whichever way it points, will be obviated, if it can be shewn,

1. That the prophetic style was of common and approved use, in the times when the prophecies were delivered, and among the people to whom they were addressed.

And

2. That this style, how dark or fanciful soever it may appear, is yet *reducible to rule;* that is, is constructed on such principles, as make it the subject of just criticism and reasonable interpretation; and, in particular, to us, at this day.

For a language is not *fanatical,* that is authorised by general practice; nor can it be deemed *unintelligible,* when it is capable of having its meaning ascertained.

I. The proof of these two points will most conveniently be given together, in a deduction of the causes, which produced the character of the prophetic style.

That character, I believe, is truly given by those who affirm, That the style of the prophets was only the poetical, and highly figurative style of the Eastern nations. But if you go farther and ask, How it came to pass, that the oriental poetry was so much more figurative than ours, it may not be enough to say, as many others have done, that this difference of character was owing to the influence of the sun, and to the superior heat and fervour, which it

SERMON IX.

gave to an eastern imagination. For I know not whether there be reason to think, that the sun hath any such effect on the powers of the mind; or that the fancies of men are apter to catch, and blaze out in metaphor, within a warm climate, than a cold one: a figurative cast of style being observable in the native poetry of all countries; and that, so far as appears from history and experience, in a pretty equal degree.

Besides, if the fact were allowed, the answer would scarce be sufficient. For, as we shall presently see, the symbolic language of Prophecy, is too consistent and uniform, hath too much of art and method in it, to be derived from the casual flights and sallies of the imagination *only*, how powerfully soever you suppose it to have operated in the prophets.

We then must go much deeper for a true account of the emblematic and highly coloured expression, which glares so strongly in the prophetic scriptures: and we shall find it, partly, in the nature of the human mind; and, partly, in the genius, indeed, of the oriental nations, and especially of the Jews, but as fashioned, not by the influence of their climate, but by the modes of their learning and institution.

SERMON IX.

I must be as brief as possible, on a subject, which many learned writers [a] have largely and fully discussed; and, as the reflexions I have to offer to you upon it, are chiefly taken from them, I may the rather bespeak your attention to what follows.

1. First, then, let it be observed, that the original language of all nations is extremely imperfect. Their stock of words being small, they explain themselves very much by *signs*, or representative actions: and their conceptions, in that early state of society, being gross and rude, the few words they have, are replete with material images, and so are what we call highly metaphorical; and this, not from choice or design, or even from any extraordinary warmth of fancy, but of necessity, and from the very nature of things.

Such is the primitive character of all languages: and it continues long in all, because the figurative manner is thought ornamental, when it is no longer necessary; and because the necessity of it is only, if at all, removed by long use and habit in abstract speculation:

[a] Mede, More, Daubuz, Vitringa, and, above all, the learned Founder of this Lecture.

SERMON IX.

a degree of refinement, to which the orientals, and the Jews especially, never attained. And therefore in their languages, very long

—*Manserunt, hodieque manent vestigia ruris.*

Thus far we may go in accounting for the figured style of the east, from general principles. But this is by no means the whole of the case. For

2. We are to reflect, that, before an alphabet was invented, and what we call literary writing was formed into an art, men had no way to record their conceptions, or to convey them to others at a distance, but by setting down the figures and shapes of such things, as were the objects of their contemplation. Hence, the way of writing in *picture*, was as universal, and almost as early, as the way of speaking in *metaphor;* and from the same reason, the necessity of the thing.

In process of time, and through many successive improvements, this rude and simple mode of *picture-writing* was succeeded by that of *symbols*, or was enlarged at least, and enriched by it. By symbols, I mean certain representative marks, rather than express pic-

tures; or if pictures, such as were at the same time *characters*, and, besides presenting to the eye the resemblance of a particular object, suggested a general idea to the mind. As, when a *horn* was made to denote *strength*, an *eye and scepter*, *majesty*, and in numberless such instances; where the picture was not drawn to express merely the thing itself, but something else, which was, or was conceived to be, analogous to it. This more complex and ingenious form of picture-writing was much practised by the Egyptians, and is that which we know by the name of HIEROGLYPHICS.

Indeed, these *symbolic characters* were likely, in a course of successive refinements, to pass into characters by *institution:* and have, in fact, undergone that change among the Chinese: and it might be expected that *both* would be laid aside by any people that should come to be acquainted with the far more convenient and expeditious method of alphabetic writing. But the event, in some instances, hath been different. The Chinese adhere to their *characters*, though from their late intercourse with the European nations, one cannot but suppose, that the knowledge of *letters* has been conveyed to them: and the Egyptians, through all the extent of their long

SERMON IX.

subsisting and highly polished empire, retained their *hieroglyphics*, notwithstanding their invention and use of an *alphabet*.

Their inducement to this practice might be, the pleasure they took in a mode of writing, which gratified their inventive curiosity in looking into the natures and analogies of things; or, it might be a strain of policy in them to secrete by this means, their more important discoveries from the vulgar; or, vanity might put them on raising the value of their knowledge by wrapping it up in a vehicle, so amusing at the same time, and mysterious.

What account soever be given of it, the fact is, that the Egyptians cultivated the hieroglyphic species of writing, with peculiar diligence; while the antiquity, the splendor, the fame of that mighty kingdom excited a veneration for it, in the rest of the world. Hence it came to pass, that the learning of those times, which was spread from Egypt, as from its center, took a strong tincture of the hieroglyphic spirit. The East was wholly infected by it; so that it became the pride of its wise men to try the reach of each other's capacity by questions conceived and proposed in this form. Even the Greeks, in much later ages, caught the man-

ner of symbolizing their conceptions from Egypt; and either drew their mythology from that quarter, or dressed it out in the old Egyptian garb. But the Israelites, especially, who had their breeding in that country, at the time when the hieroglyphic learning was at its height, carried this treasure with them, among their other *spoils*, into the land of Canaan. And, though it be credible that their great Law-giver interdicted the use of hieroglyphic characters, yet the ideas of them were deeply imprinted on their minds, and came out, on every occasion, in those symbols and emblems, with which, under the names of *riddles*, *parables*, and *dark sayings*, their writings are so curiously variegated and imbossed.

This then is the true and proper account of that peculiar style, which looks so strangely, and to those, who do not advert to this original of it, perhaps so fantastically, in the writings of the prophets. And what more natural, than that a mode of expression, which was so well known, so commonly practised, and so much revered; which was effected by the wittiest, nay, by the wisest men of those times; which was employed in the theology of the Eastern world, in its poetry, its philosophy, and all the sublimer forms of composition; What

SERMON IX.

wonder, I say, that this customary, this authorized, this admired strain of language should be that in which the sacred writers conveyed their highest and most important revelations to mankind?

Nor let any man take offence at the condescension of the divine Inspirer, as though he degraded himself, by his compliance with the humours and fancies of those to whom his inspirations were addressed. For let him reflect, that in what form of words soever it shall please God to communicate himself to man, it must still be in a way, that implies the utmost, indeed the same, condescension to our weaknesses and infirmities; nay, that immediate inspiration itself, though coming through no medium of language, is of necessity to be accommodated to our methods of perceiving and understanding, how imperfect soever they are.

Besides, if external revelation be possible, it must be given in some one mode of speech or writing, in preference to others. And, if we consider how ancient, how general, how widely diffused, this symbolic style has been, and still is, in the world; how necessary it is to rude nations, and how taking with the most refined; how large a proportion of the globe this prac-

tice had over-run before, and at the time of writing the prophecies, and what vast regions of the South and East, not yet professing the faith, but hereafter, as we presume, to be enlightened by it, the same practice, at this day, overspreads; when we consider all this, we shall cease perhaps to admire, that the style in question was adopted, rather than any other; or we shall only admire the divine goodness and wisdom of its Author, who had contrived beforehand, in the very form of this revelation, what may possibly help to bring on and facilitate the reception of it. Certainly, it may become us, on such an occasion, to enlarge our ideas a little; and not to conclude hastily and peremptorily that, when a general blessing was intended by Providence, the mode of conveying it should be instituted singly with an eye to our local notions and confined prejudices, and with no regard to the more prevailing sentiments and expectations of mankind.

In the mean time, it is past a doubt that the hieroglyphic style was predominant in the ancient world; in Judæa, particularly, from the times of Moses to the coming of Christ. There was indeed a degree of obscurity in it, so far at least as to furnish the Jews, who had

SERMON IX.

no mind to listen to their Prophets, with a pretence of not understanding them (as we see from the complaint brought against the prophet Ezekiel in the text, *Doth he not speak Parables?*) yet still, it cannot be denied, *That this mode of writing was of common and approved use in the ages, when the prophecies were delivered, and among the people, to whom they were addressed.*

Our FIRST proposition is then reasonably made out; and so much of the SECOND, as affirms that the prophetic style *is constructed on such principles as make it the subject of just criticism and rational interpretation.* For it was constructed, as we have seen, on the symbolic principles of the hieroglyphics; which were not vague uncertain things; but fixed and constant analogies, determinable in their own nature, or from the steady use that was made of them. And a language, formed on such principles, may be reasonably interpreted upon them. So that what remains is only to shew, that there *are* means, by which this abstruse language may become intelligible to us, at this day.

II. That there are such means, you will easily collect, without requiring me to come to

a detail on so immense a subject, from the following considerations.

1. Some light may be expected to arise from the study of the prophecies themselves. For the same symbols, or figures, recur frequently in those writings: and, by comparing one passage with another; the darker prophecies with the more perspicuous; the unfulfilled, with such as have been completed; and those which have their explanation annexed to them, with those that have not; by this course of inquiry, I say, there is no doubt but some considerable progress may be made in fixing the true and proper meaning of this mysterious language.

2. Very much of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, on which, as we have seen, the prophetic style was fashioned, may be learned from many ancient records and monuments, still subsisting; and from innumerable hints and passages, scattered through the Greek antiquaries and historians, which have been carefully collected and compared by learned men.

3. The Pagan superstitions of every form and species, which were either derived from Egypt, or conducted on hieroglyphic notions, have been of singular use in commenting on

SERMON IX.

the Jewish prophets. Their Omens, Augury, and Judicial Astrology seem to have proceeded on symbolic principles; the mystery being only this, That such objects, as in the hieroglyphic pictures, were made the symbols of certain ideas, were considered as omens of the things themselves. Thus, the figure of a *horse*, being the symbol of prosperity and success in arms, when a *head* of this animal was found in laying the foundations of Carthage, the Soothsayers concluded, that the character of that state would be warlike, and its fortune prosperous: or, thus again, because the *sun* was the common emblem of a King, or supreme governor in any state, an *eclipse* of this luminary was thought to indicate the ruin, or diminution, at least, of his power and fortune; and the superstition is not quite extinct at this day [b].

But, of all the Pagan superstitions, that which is known by the name of *Oneirocritics*, or the art of interpreting dreams, is most directly to our purpose. There is a curious trea-

[b] Hence, the allusion of our great poet,

> —or from behind the moon
> In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
> On half the nations, and *with fear of change*
> *Perplexes monarchs*— *P. L.* i. 596.

tise on this subject, which bears the name of Achmet, an Arabian writer; and another by Artemidorus, an Ephesian, who lived about the end of the first century [c]. In the former of these collections (for both works are compiled out of preceding and very ancient writers) the manner of interpreting dreams, according to the use of the Oriental nations, is delivered; as the rules, which the Græcian diviners followed, are deduced in the other. For, light and frivolous as this art was, it is not to be supposed that it was taken up at hazard, or could be conducted without rule; an arbitrary or capricious interpretation of dreams, considered as a mode of divination, being too gross an insult on the common sense of mankind [d]. But the rules, by which both the Greek and Oriental diviners justified their interpretations, appear to have been formed on symbolic principles, that is, on the very same ideas of analogy, by which the Egyptian hieroglyphics (now grown venerable, and even sacred) were explained. So that the prophetic style, which is all over painted with

[c] See these two works, published together, under the title of *Artemidori Daldiani et Achmetis Sereimi F. Oneirocritica*, by Nicolaus Rigaltius. *Lutet.* 1603.

[d] Non enim credo, *nullo percepto* aut cæteros artifices versari in suo munere, aut eos, qui divinatione utantur, futura prædicere. *Cic. de Fato*, c. 6.

SERMON IX.

hieroglyphic imagery, receives an evident illustration from these two works.

I have said, that this superstition was *more immediately to our purpose, than any other.* For some of the more important prophecies are delivered in the way of dreams; and therefore, without doubt, the rules for interpreting the symbols presented to the mind of the prophet in these inspired dreams, were the very same with those, that were laid down in the Gentile Oneirocritics. The conclusion, I know, may appear bold and hazardous. But you will reflect that there is really nothing more strange in applying this mode of interpretation to *dreams*, than to any other species of prophecy; to visions, for instance, or parables, or even, in general, to any part of the prophetic style. The compliance, on the part of the inspirer, is the same on every supposition; and only shews that, when the Deity thinks fit to reveal himself to men, he does it in a way that is suitable to their ideas and apprehensions. Nor is any sanction, in the mean time, given, by this accommodation of himself, to the pagan practice of divining by dreams. For, though the same symbols be interpreted in the same manner, yet the *prophecy* doth not depend on the interpretation, but the inspiration of the dream. A casual

dream, thus interpreted, is only a dream still; the received sense of the symbols, represented in it, no way inferring the completion of it. But when the Almighty sends the dream, the symbols are of another consideration, and not only signify, but *predict*, an event.

Now, if men will mistake a *barely significant emblem*, for *a prophetic inspiration*, the fault is in themselves, and not in the use of the common emblems; which may be the vehicle of a true prophecy, though craft or superstition take occasion from them to *divine lies*[e]. It follows, that the rules, which the ancient diviners observed in explaining symbolic dreams, may be safely and justly applied to the interpretation of symbolic prophecies, and especially to such of them as were delivered in the form of dreams.

4. It is lastly to be observed, that not only the Arabic and other Oriental writers, but even the Greek and Latin poets, may contribute very much to the exposition of the ancient prophets. For these poets abound in strong metaphors and glowing images, which were either copied from the symbolic language of the East, or in-

[e] Ezekiel xiii. 9.

SERMON IX.

vented on the same principles of analogy as prevailed in the Egyptian hieroglyphics. So that many expressions, which seem dark and strange in the writings of the Jewish prophets, may be clearly illustrated and familiarized to us, even from classic usage and example.

And now from these several sources; that is, from *the scriptures themselves* — from the still *subsisting monuments of Egyptian hieroglyphics* — from *the Gentile ceremonies and superstitions* — and from *the greater works of genius and fancy, transmitted to us both from the Eastern and Western poets* — such a vocabulary of the prophetic terms and symbols may be, nay hath been[f], drawn up, as serves to determine the sense of them in the same manner, as any common art or language is explained by its own proper key, or dictionary; and there is, in truth, no more difficulty in fixing the import of the prophetic style, than of any other language or technical phraseology whatsoever.

III. But, if the case be so clear, you may now be tempted to ask, "What then becomes

[f] See Dr. Lancaster's *Symbolical* and *Alphabetical Dictionary*, prefixed to his abridgment of the Commentary on the Revelations, by Mr. Daubuz.

of the obscurity, in which the prophecies are said to be involved; and in particular, how comes it to pass, that they may not be as well explained, before the completion, as after it[g]; which yet is constantly denied by writers on this subject, and, even, by your own principles, cannot be supposed?"

To this objection, I shall not reply by saying, That the style of the prophets, though intelligible, yet requires much practice in the interpreter to unfold its meaning; for that is the case of many other arts and sciences, which yet are generally understood: nor, that the symbolic terms are frequently capable of several senses, which must needs perplex the interpretation; for there is no common language, in which the plainest words do not frequently admit the same difference of construction, which yet creates no great difficulty to those who attend closely to the scope of a writer: I shall not therefore, I say, amuse you with these evasive answers, but reply, directly to the purpose of your inquiry, by observing,

"That there are several methods, or, if you will, artifices, by which the inspired writers,

[g] See this objection urged by Mr. Collins in his *Grounds and Reasons*, &c. p. 220. Lond. 1737.

SERMON IX.

under the cover of a symbolic expression, and sometimes even without it, might effectually conceal their meaning, before the completion of a prophecy, though the language, in which they write, be clearly explicable on fixed and stated rules."

1. When the prophecy is of remote events, the *subject* is frequently not announced, or announced only in general terms. Thus, an *earthquake* is described—a *mountain* is said to be thrown down—a *star*, to fall from heaven; and so in numberless other instances. Now, an earthquake, in hieroglyphic language, denotes a *revolution in government;* a mountain is the symbol of a *kingdom*, or *capital city;* a star, of *a prince*, or *great man:* but of *what* government, of *what* kingdom, of *what* prince, the prophet speaks, we are not told, and are frequently unable to find out, till a full coincidence of all circumstances, in the event, discloses the secret.

2. The prophetic terms are not only figurative, but sometimes, and in no common degree, hyperbolical (of which the reason will be given hereafter), so that nothing but the event can determine the true size and value of them. This seems to have been the case of those pro-

phecies in the Old Testament, which describe the tranquillity and felicity of Christ's kingdom; and may possibly be the case of those prophecies in the New, which respect the Millennium.

3. It being the genius of the prophetic style to be ænigmatical, this cast is sometimes purposely given to it, even when the expression is most plain and direct. Thus Jeremiah prophesies of Zedekiah, king of Judah, *that he should be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, that his eyes should behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and that he should go to Babylon* [h]. Ezekiel, prophesying of the same prince, says, *that he should go to Babylon, but that he should not see it, though he should die there* [i]. Now Josephus tells us, that the apparent inconsistency of these two prophecies determined Zedekiah to believe neither of them. Yet both were strictly and punctually fulfilled.

4. Lastly, the chief difficulty of all lies in a circumstance, not much observed by interpreters, and, from the nature of it, not *observable*, till after the event; I mean, in *a mixed*

[h] Jeremiah xxxiv. 3. [i] Ezek. xii. 13.

SERMON IX.

use of the plain and figured style : so that the prophetic descriptions are sometimes *literal*, even when they appear most figurative; and sometimes, again, they are highly *figurative*, when they appear most plain. An instance of *literal* expression, under the mask of figurative, occurs in the prophet Nahum, who predicts the overthrow of Nineveh in these words — *With an over-running flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof*, [Nahum i. 8.] An *over-running flood*, is the hieroglyphic symbol of *desolation by a victorious enemy*: and in this highly figurative sense, an interpreter of the prophecy would, in all likelihood, understand the expression. But the event shewed the sense to be literal; that city being taken, as we know from history, by means of an *inundation*. Of *figurative* expression, under the form of literal, take the following instance from a prophecy of Christ himself; who says to the Jews, *Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days*, [John i. 19.] It was natural enough for the Jews to understand our Lord as speaking of the *temple* at Jerusalem; the rather, as this term had not been, and, I think, could not be, applied, to any person, before Jesus: to *Him*, it might be so applied; and we know that *he spake of the temple of his body*, [ver. 21.]

The same equivocal use was, sometimes, purposely made of *proverbial expressions*, as learned men have observed [k].

I omit many other causes of obscurity in the prophecies; such as the seeming incredibility, sometimes, of the things predicted—the undefined chronology and geography—the intricacy of the method—and many other considerations. But you will collect from these brief hints, respecting the *expression* only, that, though the symbolic language be reducible to rule, and therefore, in the main, sufficiently intelligible, yet that there is room enough for the introduction of so much obscurity into the prophetic writings, as may answer the ends of the inspirer, and conceal the full meaning of them from the most sagacious interpreter, till it be revealed, in due time, by the event.

Or, if it be thought that such difficulties as the event removes, are not, in their own nature, invincible, before it happens, it is still to be considered, that the giver of the prophecy is, by supposition, divine; and as he, therefore, foresaw, in framing the texture of it, that such difficulties would, in fact, be invincible,

[k] See Grotius on Matth. xxvi. 23.

SERMON IX.

they served the purpose of a designed concealment just as well, as if, in nature, they were. Whence the conclusion is still the same, That the prophetic style might be the cover of impenetrable obscurities in a prophecy, before its completion, and yet the terms of it be clearly explicable on established rules; the event only enabling the expositor more skilfully and properly to apply those rules.

IV. To conclude this subject; It will now be acknowledged, that the suspicions which have been taken up against the prophetic way of writing, as if it were vague, illusory, or unintelligible, are utterly without foundation. The style of the prophets was the known, authorized style of their age and country, in all writings especially, of a sacred or solemn character; and is even yet in use with a great part of mankind. It further appears, that, as it was understood by those to whom it was addressed, so the principles, on which it was formed, are discoverable by many obvious methods, and may be applied, with success, to the interpretation of it, at this day.

The prophetic style is, then, a *sober and reasonable* mode of expression. But this is not all. We may, even, discern the *expe-*

diency, I had almost said, the *necessity*, of this style, considered as the *medium*, or vehicle of prophetic inspiration.

For we have seen, that the scheme of scriptural prophecy extends through all time; and is so contrived as to adumbrate future and more illustrious events, in preceding and less important transactions: a circumstance, which shews the harmony and connexion of the whole scheme, and is not imitable by any human art, or forethought whatsoever. But now a figurative style is so proper to that end, that we scarcely conceive how it could be accomplished by any other. For thus the expression conforms, at once, to the type, and antitype: it is, as it were, a robe of state, for the one; and only, the ordinary, accustomed dress of the other: as we may see from the prophecies, which *immediately* respect the restoration of the Jews from their ancient captivities, and, *ultimately*, their final triumphant return from their present dispersion — from the prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, which prefigure, at the same time, the day of judgment — from those concerning the first coming of Christ, which, also, set forth his reign with the saints on earth, and

SERMON IX.

even the glories of his heavenly kingdom — and in a multitude of other instances.

These successive, and so different, schemes of Providence could only be signified *together* in a mode of language, that contracted, or enlarged itself, as the occasion required. But such is the singular property of a symbolic style. For none but this, hath fold and drapery enough, if I may so speak, to invest the *greater* subjects; while yet (so complying is the texture of this expression) it readily adapts itself to the *less considerable*, which it ennobles only, and not disfigures. The difference is, that what is a metaphor in the former case, becomes an hyperbole in the latter. And this double use of the same symbol, is the true account of such figures as are thought most extravagant in the description of the prophets.

We see, then, in every view, how reasonable, how expedient, how divine, the symbolic style is, in such writings as the prophetic. So that if any be disposed, in our days, to take up the complaint of the text, and to upbraid the prophets by asking, *Do they not speak Parables?* We may now take courage

to answer, Yes: but *parables*, which, as dark as they are accounted to be, may be well understood; and, what is more, *parables*, which are so expressed, as to carry an evidence in themselves that they *are* what they assume to be, of divine inspiration.

SERMON X.

THE STYLE AND METHOD OF THE APOCALYPSE.

EZEKIEL XX. 49.

— They say of me, Doth he not speak Parables?

SERMON X.

ALL the prophecies of the Old and New Testament are written in *parables;* that is, in highly figurative terms; which yet, on examination, have appeared to be explicable on certain fixed and rational grounds of criticism.

So far, therefore, as any prejudice may have been entertained against the prophecies concerning Antichrist, as if the language of them

were too abstruse or fanciful to be understood, enough hath been already said to shew, that it is not well founded.

It must, however, be confessed, that the book of *Revelations*[a], which contains the most, and the chief prophecies on the subject of Antichrist, is of a deeper and more mysterious contrivance, than any other of the prophetic

[a] As to the *authority* of this extraordinary book (although the discussion of this point be foreign to my present purpose) it may be proper to acquaint such persons, as have not made the inquiry for themselves, and are perhaps incapable of making it, with the sentiments, which our ablest writers have entertained of it.

Mr. Mede, a capable inquirer, if there ever was any, says roundly — "The Apocalypse hath more human (not "to speak of *divine)* authority, than any other book of the "New Testament besides, even from the time it was first "delivered." *Works*, p. 602.

—And to the same purpose, Sir Isaac Newton — "I do "not find any other book of the New Testament so "strongly attested, or commented upon so early, as this "of the Apocalypse." *Observations on Daniel*, &c. page 249.

Thus, these two incomparable men. What some minute critics have said, or insinuated to the contrary, is not worth mentioning; farther, than just to observe, that, if the authority of this momentous book be indeed questionable, the church of Rome could hardly have failed long since to make the discovery, or to triumph in it.

Hoc Ithacus velit, et magno mercentur Atridæ.

SERMON X.

writings. Whence, our next step, in this inquiry, must be, To trace the CAUSES of that peculiar obscurity; and to suggest, as we go along, the MEANS, by which it hath been, or may be, removed.

The *causes*, are to be sought in the STYLE, and the METHOD, of that book. I say nothing of the *subject*; for, though the *things predicted* may darken a prophecy, unfulfilled, the *event* will shew what they are; and it is not necessary, that we should anxiously inquire into the meaning of a prophecy, till it be accomplished.

I. *First*, then, the STYLE of the Revelations (for I mean not to consider it, with regard to the Greek tongue, in which it is composed, or, to the Hebrew idiom, with which it is coloured) The *style*, I say, being symbolical, like that of the other prophecies, must, in general, be explained on the same principles, that is, must be equally intelligible, in both. Yet, if we attend nicely to the style of this prophecy, some difference will be found, in *the choice of the symbols*, and in *the continuity of the symbolic form*.

1. To explain my meaning, on the first article, I must observe, That, though the pro-

phetic style abounds in *hieroglyphic* symbols, properly so called, yet the Israelites, when they adopted that style, did not confine themselves to the old Egyptian stock of symbols; but, working on the same ground of analogy, superadded many others, which their own circumstances and observations suggested to them. Their divine ritual, their civil customs, their marvellous history, and even the face and aspect of their country, afforded infinite materials for the construction of fresh symbols: and these, when they came into common use, their prophets freely and largely employed. Thus, *incense*, from the religious use of it in the Mosaical service, denotes *prayer*, or *mental adoration*[b] — *to tread a wine-press*, from their custom of pressing grapes, signifies *destruction, attended with great slaughter*[c] — *to give water in the wilderness*, in allusion to the miraculous supply of that element, during the passage of the Israelites through the wilderness to the holy land, is the emblem of *unexpected relief in distress*[d]; — and, to mention no more, a *forest*, such as Lebanon, abounding in lofty cedars, represents a *great city, with its flourishing ranks of inhabitants*[e]; just as, a *mountain*,

[b] Mal. i. 11.
[c] Lament. i. 15.
[d] Isaiah xl. 20.
[e] Ezek. xx. 47.

SERMON X. from the situation of the Jewish temple on mount Moria, is made to stand for the *Christian Church*[f].

Now, though the symbols of this class be occasionally dispersed through the old prophets, yet they are more frequent, and much thicker sown, in the Revelations: so that to a reader, not well versed in the Jewish story and customs, this difference may add something to the obscurity of the book.

If you ask the *reason* of this difference, it is plainly this. The scene of the apocalyptic visions is laid, not only in Judæa, but in the temple at Jerusalem; whence the imagery is, of course, taken. It was natural for the writer to draw his allusions from Jewish objects, and especially from the ceremonial of the temple-service. Besides, the declared scope of the prophecy being to predict the fortunes of the Christian church, what so proper as to do this under the cover of Jewish ideas; the law itself, as we have before seen, and as St. Paul expressly tells us, having been so contrived, as to present the *shadow* of that future dispensation?

[f] Isaiah ii. 2.

This then (and for the reason assigned) is ONE distinguishing character of the Apocalyptic style. But the difficulty of interpretation, arising from it, cannot be considerable; or, if it be, may be overcome by an obvious method, by a careful study of the Jewish history and law.

2. The OTHER mark of distinction, which I observed in the style of this book, is the *continuity* of the symbolic manner. Parables are frequent, indeed, in the old prophets, but interspersed with many passages of history, and have very often their explanation annexed. This great parable of St. John is, throughout, carried on in its own proper form, without any such interruption, and, except in *one* instance[g], without any express interpretation of the parabolic terms.

Now, the prophecy, no doubt, must be considerably obscured by this circumstance. But then let it be considered, that we have proportionable *means* of understanding it. For, if the symbols be continued, they are still but the *same*[h], as had been before in use with the

[g] Chap. xvii.

[h] The learned Bishop Andrews says expressly—"You shall scarce find a phrase in the Revelations of St. John,

SERMON X.

elder prophets; whose writings, therefore, are the proper and the certain key of the *Revelations*.

From these distinctive characters, then, of the Apocalyptic style[i], nothing more can be inferred, than the necessity of studying *the Law, and the Prophets*, in order to understand the language of this last and most mysterious revelation. And what is more natural, nay what can be thought more divine, than that, in a system, composed of two dependent dispensations, the study of the former should be made necessary to the comprehension of the latter; and that the very uniformity of style and colouring, in the two sets of prophecies,

that is not taken out of Daniel, or some other prophet." *Vix reperias apud Johannem phrasin aliquam, nisi vel ex Daniele, vel ex alio aliquo prophetâ desumptam.* Resp. ad Bellarm. Apol. p. 234.

[i] An eminent writer gives an exact idea of it, in these words—"The style [of the Revelations] is very prophetical, as to the things spoken: And very hebraizing, as to the speaking of them. Exceeding much of the old prophets language and matter adduced to intimate new stories: And exceeding much of the Jews language and allusion to their customs and opinions, thereby to speak the things more familiarly to be understood." Dr. LIGHTFOOT, *Harm. of the N. T.* p. 154, London, 1655.

should admonish us of the intimate connexion, which each has with the other, to the end that we might the better conceive the meaning, and fathom the depth, of the divine councils in *both?*

But, without speculating further on the final purposes of this Judaical and Symbolical character, so strongly impressed on the Apocalypse, it must evidently appear that the difficulties of interpretation, occasioned by it, are not invincible; nay, that, to an attentive and rightly prepared interpreter, they will be scarce any difficulties at all [k].

[k] I have heard it affirmed, on good grounds, that the late Dr. Samuel Clarke, being asked in conversation by a friend, whether, as he had taken much pains to interpret the other books of Scripture, he had never attempted any thing on the Revelations, replied, *He had not; but that, notwithstanding, he thought he understood every word of it:* Not meaning, we may be sure, that he knew how to apply every part of that prophecy, but that he understood the *phraseology*, in which it was written; which a man, so conversant as he was in the style of scripture, might very well do.—Calvin, indeed, has been commended for making the opposite declaration: And, it may be, with good reason: For (not to derogate in any respect from the character of this great man) the language of the Scriptures, and especially of the prophetical scriptures, was in no degree so well understood in his time, as it was in that of Dr. S. Clarke.

SERMON X.

I proceed, then,

II. To the SECOND, and more considerable cause of the obscurities, found in this prophecy, the METHOD, in which it is composed.

The other prophecies have, doubtless, their difficulties, arising from the abrupt manner, in which, agreeably to the Oriental genius, they are delivered: But then, being short and unconnected with each other, the apparent disorder of those prophecies, has rarely any sensible effect in preventing the right application of them. The case is different with the prophecies, contained in this book. For, having been all delivered at once, and respecting a series of events, which were to come to pass successively in the history of the Christian Church, it is reasonable to expect that some certain and determinable method should be observed in the delivery of them; and the true secret of that method, whatever it be, must be investigated, before we can, with success, apply any single prophecy to its proper subject.

The *first*, and most obvious expectation of a reader is, that the events predicted in this prophecy should follow each other in the order of the prophecy itself, or that the series of the

visions should mark out and determine the succession of the subjects, to which they relate. But there is reason to think, on the face of the prophecy, that this method is not observed. SERMON X.

A *second* conclusion would, then, be hastily taken up, that there is no regular method at all in these visions, but that each is to be applied singly, and without any reference to the rest, to such events as it might be found, in some tolerable degree, to suit: And then it is plain, that fancy would have too much scope afforded her in the interpretation of these visions, to produce any firm and settled conviction, that they were rightly and properly applied. Yet, as this idea of the Apocalypse would favour the laziness, the precipitancy, the presumption, and, very often, the malignity of the human mind, it is no wonder that it should be readily and eagerly embraced. And, in fact, it was to this pre-conceived notion of a general disorder in the texture of these prophecies, that the little progress, which, for many ages, had been made in the exposition of them, is chiefly to be ascribed.

But then, *lastly*, if neither the order of the prophecy be that of the events, nor a total dis-

SERMON X.

order in the construction of it can be reasonably allowed, the question is, By what *rules* was it composed, and on what ideas of *method* is it to be explained?

This question, as obvious as it seems, was not presently asked; and, when it was asked, not easily answered. The clear light, indeed, which the Reformation had let in on some parts of this prophecy, and a spirit of inquiry, which sprung up with the revival of Letters, excited a general attention to this mysterious book. But, as each interpreter brought his own hypothesis along with him, the perplexities of it were not lessened, but increased by so many discordant schemes of interpretation: And the issue of much elaborate inquiry was, that the book itself was disgraced by the fruitless efforts of its commentators, and on the point of being given up, as utterly impenetrable, when a sublime Genius arose, in the beginning of the last century, and surprised the learned world with that great desideratum, *A Key to the Revelations.*

This extraordinary person was, JOSEPH MEDE: of whose character it may not be improper to give a slight sketch, before I lay before you the substance of his discoveries.

SERMON X.

He was a candid, sincere man; disinterested, and unambitious; of no faction in religion or government (both which began in his time to be overrun with factions) but solely devoted to the love of truth, and to the investigation of it. His learning was vast, but well chosen and well digested; and his understanding, in no common degree, strong and capacious.

With these qualities of the head and heart, he came to the study of the prophecies, and especially of the Revelations: But, with so little *bigotry* for the scheme of interpretation concerning Antichrist, that, as he tells us himself, *he had even conceived some prejudice against it*[l]: And, what is stranger still in a man of his inventive genius, with so little *enthusiasm* in his temper for *any* scheme of interpretation whatsoever, that, when he had made his great discovery, he was in no haste to publish it to the world[m]; and, when at length he did this,

[l] "As for me, I am conscious of my weakness and unworthiness; being, when these kind of thoughts first possessed me, looking another way with a prejudice incompatible to this." *General Pref. to Mede's Works*, p. 20, from a MS Letter.

[m] He printed only a few copies of his *Clavis Apocalyptica* in 1627, at his own expence, and for the use of his friends. *Pref. to his Commentary.*

SERMON X.

he was still less in haste to apply it, that is, to shew its important use in explaining the Apocalyptic visions[n]. Cool, deliberate, and severe, in forming his judgments, he was so far from being obsequious to the fancies of other men, that he was determined only, by the last degree of evidence, to acquiesce in any conclusions of his own[o].

In short, with no *vanity* to indulge, (for he was superior to this last infirmity of ingenious

[n] His Commentary, on the principles of his *Clavis*, did not appear till 1632.

[o] "I am by nature *cunctabundus* in all things, but in this [his Exposition] let no man blame me, if I take more pause than ordinary." MS Letter in *Gen. Pref.* p. 22. And again, in a Letter of reply *ad animadversiones Ludovici de Dieu*, "Eo ingenio sum (delicatulo, an moroso) ut nisi ubi interpretatio commodè et absque salebris eat, nunquam mihi satisfacere soleam." WORKS, p. 569. Yet of this *sage* man, could the Bishop of Meaux allow himself to speak thus negligently — *Il s'est rendu de nos jours célèbre en Angleterre* PAR SES DOCTES REVERIES *sur l'Apocalypse. Hist. des Var.* l. xiii. p. 257. But M. de Meaux knew what he did, when he *affected* this contempt of Joseph Mede. He was then at liberty to turn himself from the ablest advocate of the Protestant cause, to the *weakest;* I mean, M. Jurieu, whose indiscretions afforded, indeed, ample scope for the raillery of this lively prelate. Mr. Mede was not a man to be confuted in this way, and still less by a fanciful and ill-supported *Exposition of the Apocalypse.*

men [p])—with no *interest* in view (for the interest of Churchmen lay at that time, as he well understood, in a different quarter [q])—with no *spleen* to gratify (for even neglect and solitude could not engender this unmanly vice in him [r])—with no oblique purposes, I say,

p As appears from his backwardness to publish his discoveries, and from his unconcern about the reception of them. But see his Letter to Mr. Hartlib, Ep 96, p. 881; and compare with his answer to Dr. Twisse, Ep. 51, p. 811. See also Ep. 98, to Mr. Hartlib, Aug. 6, 1638, not long before his death, in which are these words:

"I have not been very obtrusive unto men, to acquaint them with my notions and conceits—for some of them that are but lately known have lain by me above these twenty years." P. 883.

q *The point of the Pope's being Antichrist, as a dead fly, marred the savour of* THAT OINTMENT—meaning the merit he had of being known to entertain some opinions, then much cherished by the ruling clergy. Ep. 56, p. 818. He says afterwards of himself, in the same Letter, *I thank God, I never made any thing hitherto the caster of my resolution, but reason and evidence, on what side soever the advantage or disadvantage fell.*

r His friends speak much of his chearful disposition.—But I draw this conclusion from the tenour of his *life* and *writings;* and, above all, from that famous declaration which he made in confidence to a friend, that, *if he might but obtain a Donative sine curâ, of so much value as, together with his fellowship* [of Christ's College in Cambridge,] *should enable him to keep a horse, for his recreation, he would set up his staff for this world. App. to his*

SERMON X.

which so often mislead the pens of other writers, but with the single, unmixed love of truth, he dedicated his great talents to the study of the prophetic Scriptures, and was able to unfold, in the MANNER I am now to represent to you, this mysterious prophecy of the Revelations.

He had observed, that the miscarriage of former interpreters had been owing, chiefly, to a vain desire of finding their own sense in this prophecy, rather than the sense of the prophet. Laying aside, then, all hypotheses whatsoever, he sate down to the book itself, and resolved to know nothing more of it, than what the frame and texture of its composition might clearly reveal to him. He considered the whole, as a naked recital of facts, literally expressed; and not as a prophetic scheme, mystically represented. In this way of inquiry, he discerned, that several parts of the history, whatever their secret and involved meaning might be, were *homogeneous*, and *contemporary*; that is, they related to the same subject,

Life, p. 40.—The simplicity of this declaration, makes one confident of its truth. And a man of so moderate desires, was in no danger of having his temper *soured* by disappointments.

and were comprised within the same period; and this, though they were not connected in the order of the narration, but lay dispersed in different quarters of it. These several sets of historical passages (or, of *Visions*, to speak in the language of the book itself) he carefully analyzed and compared; shewed, from circumstances, not imagined, but found, in the history, their mutual relation and correspondency; and established his conclusions, as he went along, not in a loose way of popular conjecture, but in the strictest forms of Geometric reasoning. The coincident histories, thus classed and scrutinized, he distinguished by the name of SYNCHRONISMS; and gave them to the learned world, in this severe scientific form, without further comment or illustration, under the title of CLAVIS APOCALYPTICA, or A KEY TO THE REVELATIONS.

In considering this discovery, which did so much honour to the profound genius and accurate investigation of its author, one clearly perceives how it serves to the end proposed.

First, it appears that the order of the Visions is not that of the events; in other words, that the prophecy is not to be so explained, as if the events, predicted in it, fol-

SERMON X.

lowed each other in the same train as the Visions. For the *facts*, which constitute the scheme or fable of the prophecy, literally and historically considered, do not succeed to each other in that train; therefore the *events*, whatever they may be, which those facts adumbrate, most certainly cannot.

Secondly, It appears what the true, or chronological order of the Visions, is; namely, that, which the nature and connexion of the things transacted in them, points out and declares. So that, if the real time of any one Vision can be shewn, the relative time of the rest may be easily settled. For (to quote Mr. Mede's own words) *such Visions as contemporate with that already ascertained, are of course to be applied to the same times; while such as, in the order of the story, precede that Vision, are to be referred to preceding events, and those, which follow it, are in like manner to be explained of subsequent transactions*[s].

[s] Siquidem, quæ isti tuo Vaticinio jam, ut dixi, cognito, cætera contemporaverint Vaticinia, iisdem procul dubio temporibus sunt applicanda; quæ autem præcedunt, non nisi de præcedaneis; quæ succedunt, pariter de succedaneis eventibus sunt interpretanda.

Clavis Apocal. Works, p. 432.

By this means, the whole plan or method of the Apocalypse will be laid down. The several synchronical prophecies will thus fall in their proper places; and there will be no doubt of the relative situation, which each holds in the general system.

Thirdly, as we now see the true order of the prophecies (though for the wisest reasons, no doubt, the order, in which they are delivered, be sometimes different) so it is to be observed, that the knowledge of this order is a great restraint on the fancy of an expositor; who is not now at liberty to apply the prophecies to events of any time, to which they appear to suit, but to events only falling within that time, to which they belong in the course of this pre-determined method. And if to this restriction, which of itself is considerable, we add *another*, which arises from the necessity of applying, not one, but many prophecies (which are, thus, shewn to synchronize with each other) to the *same* time, we can hardly conceive how an interpretation should keep clear of these impediments, and make its way through so many interfering checks, unless it be the *true* one. Just as when a Lock (to take the author's allusion) is composed of many, and intricate wards, the *Key*, that turns easily

SERMON X.

within them, and opens the Lock, can only be that which properly belongs to it.

After all, it may be difficult, I know, to convey a distinct idea of the uses, to which this synchronal method serves, to those who have not read, and even studied, Mr. Mede's work. But the sum of the matter is this, That the order of the events and of the Visions is *not* the same—that the *true* order of the events, is to be sought in certain characters, not fancied at pleasure, but inserted, in the Visions themselves — and, lastly, that the whole book of the Revelations being thus resolvable into a particular determinate order, in which the several sets of synchronal prophecies regularly succeed to each other, no exposition of this book can be admitted, that does not refer every single prophecy to its true place in the system, and provide at the same time that no violence be done to any other prophecies, which synchronize with it.

And thus much concerning the TRUE ORDER of the Apocalypse; deduced, you see, from no precarious hypothetic reasonings, but from notes and characters, inclosed in that book; that is, from intrinsic arguments, which have

their evidence in themselves, and conclude alike on every supposition.

If we would know more distinctly what the EXTERIOR FORM of it is; and how it comes to differ so widely from the plan of a chronological arrangement; here, too, our sagacious expositor will give us satisfaction. For, in bringing together and comparing his synchronisms, he found (what had escaped the attention of all others) that the main body of the prophecy is made up of TWO [t] great parts; which are, also, synchronical; so that, setting out from the same goal, and measuring the same space, they both concur in the same end: but with this difference, that the *former* division more immediately regards the affairs of the *Empire*; the *latter*, those of the *Church*.

Still, this is not all. Our attentive and penetrating commentator further discovered, That the two great component parts of this prophecy, though distinct, are very artificially connected, and shewn to harmonize throughout with each other, by making the same concluding event [u], once told, the catastrophe of both.

[t] From ch. iv. to the end of ch. ix: And from ch. x. to the end.

[u] The sounding of the seventh trumpet.

SERMON X.

For the *former* part is purposely, and with express warning given [v], left unfinished, till a summary deduction of the *latter* part down to the same point of time [w], (by way of prelude to the more extended visions of this last part, which follow to the end of the book, and to signify, that both parts are contemporary) furnished the occasion of shutting up the two prophecies together in one common term: which, however, had the appearance of being misplaced, till the detection of this singular contrivance, by means of the synchronisms, pointed out the use and end of the present disposition [x].

[v] Ch x. 7. [w] Ch. xi. 15.

[x] The reader may form a distinct idea of the method, in which the *whole* book of the Apocalypse is disposed, by observing that it is resolvable into THREE great parts.

The FIRST part, is that of the EPISTLES to the seven churches, contained in the three first chapters, and is not at all considered by Mr. Mede.

The SECOND part (with which Mr. Mede begins his commentary) is that of the SEALED BOOK, from ch. iv. to ch. x; and contains *the fates of the Empire*, or its civil revolutions, yet, with a reference, still, to the state and fortune of the Christian Church.

The THIRD part, is that of the OPEN BOOK, with what follows to the end; and exhibits in a more minute and extended view, *the fates of the Christian Church*, especially during its Apostacy, and after its recovery from it.

Another cause of the seeming perplexity in which this Prophecy is involved, is, That, it being expedient to treat the same subject in

This THIRD division may, further, be considered as consisting of TWO parts. The FIRST contains, in ch. xi, a summary view of what should befal the Christian Church, contemporary with the events deduced in the *second* part concerning the Empire; and is given in this place, in order to connect the *second* and *third* parts, and to shew their correspondence and contemporaneity. See Mr. Mede's Clavis, p. 424; and Comment. Apocalypt. p. 476.

The SECOND part of the last division, from ch. xii. to the end, gives a detailed account of what should befal the Christian Church in distinct, and, several of them, synchronical visions.

It has been thought by some an objection to Mr. Mede's scheme, "That the prophecy of the *open book*, (which contains, according to him, all the remaining visions to the end of the Revelations) is not only, for the *subject*, more considerable, but, for the *size* of the volume, larger, than the Prophecy of the *sealed book*; whereas, the name given to it, βιβλαρίδιον, or *little book*, seems very clearly to express the contrary."

If this objection be thought material (for I do not find that Mr. Mede condescends to take any notice of it) it *might*, perhaps, be obviated by supposing, That the *little book* contains the xith chapter, only, being a compendium of the *third* division, and inserted in this place to shew the contemporaneity of the *two last* and principal parts; and that all which follows to the end, is to be regarded as a sort of *comment* on the little book, or larger explication of its contents: As if the design had been to consult our weakness, in presenting us, *first*, with an abridged view

SERMON X.

different respects, and to give different views of it, according as two sets of men, the true worshipers and the false, were affected by the fortunes of the Christian Church, this shifting and opposite face of things could not be exhibited together; but was to be set forth in

of a great scheme, and *then*, in drawing it out at large, for our more distinct information.

But the *truer* answer to the difficulty I take to be, That the *sealed book* is represented under the idea of a *book*, properly so called, which, upon being opened, presents to the eye the several objects and schemes of the propheey, distinctly delineated on the *roll*, or volume, when it eomes to be unfolded, and whieh, therefore, must needs be considered as a *large* one. The *open book*, on the other hand, is to be regarded, not as a real, but *metaphorical* book; and is not produced to be read or contemplated, after a gradual evolution of it, but to be *eaten*, at once, by the prophet; like that book, to which it alludes, and from which the imagery is taken, in the visions of Ezekiel [ii. 8. and iii. 1, 2, 3.] — to *eat a book*, being, in the hieroglyphics, to *meditate upon*, and to *digest*, its contents. So that this book, to distinguish it from the other, is named a *little book*: not, that the revelations, conveyed by it, are less considerable, or less numerous, than the other, but that the *use*, to which it is put, required only that it should be spoken of, as a *book* simply; the diminutive form being here suggested in the term βιβλαρίδιον, that the metaphor of *eating* it might seem the easier; and (because the former *sealed* book was of an immense size) might, under this idea, present itself the more naturally, and give less offence, to the imagination.

several and successive, though contemporary, visions. Hence, the prophecy is thought to proceed, when, in fact, it stands still, and only presents another prospect of the same transactions.

But I enter no farther into the mysterious contexture of this book; through which, however, the clue of the synchronisms, if well pursued, would safely conduct us. It is enough to my purpose to have shewn, That as the *Language* of the Revelations is intelligible, so the *Method* is not involved in such intricacies, but that, in general, a regular, a consistent, and, what is more, a *true* [y] conception may be formed of it. Whence no sober man needs be discouraged from reading this book; or will be in danger, I think, of losing either his wits, or his reputation, in the study of it. For what should hinder a book, though of prophecies,

[y] I am not ignorant that many interpreters have thought otherwise. But possibly they have not enough attended to the advice, which Mr. Mede used to give to such of his friends as did not enter into his ideas — EXPENDE. My meaning is, that, if they had possessed the patience, or the sagacity, to understand this great Inventor, before they objected to him, they would perhaps have seen cause to acquiesce in the *Method*, pointed out by him, instead of attempting in various ways, and to little purpose, to improve upon it.

SERMON X.

from being understood, when its *method* may be clearly defined, and its *language decyphered?* Provided always, that we only interpret a prophecy by the event, and do not take upon us to determine the event by a premature construction of the prophecy.

With this Apocalyptic key then (of which so much has been said), this *key of knowledge*, in my hands, it may, now, be expected that I should open this *dark parable* of the Revelation, by applying so much of it, at least, as respects Antichrist, to Apostate Papal Rome. But, besides that there would not, in what remains of this course, be room enough for a detailed account of the prophecies, *other reasons* restrain me from entering immediately on a task, not less easy perhaps, than amusing. For Interpreters, I think, have generally been too much in haste to apply the prophecies, before they had sufficiently prepared the way for their application: So that, leaving many doubts unresolved, which men of thought and inquiry are apt to entertain on this subject, or not laying before them all the reasons and inducements, which should engage their attention to it, their clearest expositions are not received, and possibly not considered.

SERMON X.

With regard, then, to the prophecies, concerning Antichrist, though the chief obstructions in our way seem fairly removed, and it be now evident that there *are* certain grounds, on which the most abstruse of them may be reasonably interpreted, yet, because the application of them is a work of time and industry, many persons, before they undertake it, may desire to know, What GENERAL ARGUMENTS there are, which may assure them, beforehand, that their labour will not be misemployed, and that Papal Rome is, in fact, concerned in the tenour of these prophecies: And, when this demand has been made, they may further wish to be informed, To what ENDS OR USES this whole inquiry serves; of importance enough, I mean, to encourage and reward their vigorous prosecution of it?

These desires and expectations are apparently not unreasonable: And to satisfy them, in the best manner I can, will be the scope and purpose of the two following Lectures.

SERMON XI.

PROPHETIC CHARACTERS OF ANTICHRIST.

LUKE xii. 56.

— *How is it, that ye do not discern this time?*

SERMON XI.

SO much having been said on the *manner*, in which the prophecies, respecting Antichrist, may be interpreted; I imagine that now, at length, ye are disposed to ask, On what GENERAL GROUNDS we affirm, that the Church of Rome is actually concerned in them.

To resolve this question, it will be sufficient to set before you, in few words, some of the more obvious *notes*, or *characters*, by which

Antichrist is marked out in the prophecies: such, and so many of them, as may convince you, that they are fairly applicable to the Church of Rome; and that, taken together, they cannot well admit any other application. SERMON XI.

Of these prophetic characters,

I. The FIRST, I shall mention, is, *That we are to look for Antichrist within the proper limits of the Roman empire.*

On this head, there is no controversy among those who acknowledge the authority of the prophet Daniel, and can be none: For that prophet, in his famous vision of the four kingdoms, says expressly, that, *among* the ten kingdoms into which the fourth, or Roman, shall be divided, ANOTHER *shall arise*[a]; that is, as all interpreters agree, the kingdom of Antichrist. So that this power, whatever it be, must have its birth and seat within the compass of the ten kingdoms, that is, of the

[a] Dan. vii. 7, 8.—I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast—had *ten horns*. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them *another little horn*—Compare with ver. 24.—The ten horns out of this kingdom are *ten kings* (or kingdoms) that shall arise: and *another shall arise after them*.

SERMON XI.

Roman empire, when, in some future time from the giving of Daniel's prophecy, it should be so divided.

But, to fix the station of the Antichristian power more precisely, it is to be observed, that, as the four kingdoms of Daniel, considered in succession to each other, form a *prophetic chronology* [b]; so in another view, they form a *prophetic geography* [c], being considered, in the eye of prophecy, as *co-existent*, as still *alive*, and subsisting together, when the dominion of all, but the last, was taken away [d].

In consequence of this idea, which Daniel gives us of his four kingdoms, so much only is to be reckoned into the description of each kingdom, as is peculiar to each; the remainder being part of some other kingdom, still supposed to be in being, to which it properly belongs. Thus, the SECOND, or Persian kingdom, does not take in the nations of Chaldæa and Assyria, which make the body of the *first*

[b] Mede, p. 712.

[c] Sir Isaac Newton, p. 31.

[d] Dan. vii. 11, 12.—Concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their *dominion taken away*: yet their *lives were prolonged* for a season and a time.

kingdom; nor the THIRD, or Græcian kingdom, the countries of Media and Persia, being the body of the *second*. In like manner, the FOURTH, or Roman kingdom, does not, in the contemplation of the prophet, comprehend those provinces, which make the body of the *third*, or Græcian kingdom, but such only as constitute its own body, that is, the provinces on this side of Greece: where, therefore, we are to look for the *eleventh*, or Antichristian kingdom, as being to start up *among* the ten, into which the Roman kingdom should be divided.

We see, then, that, as Antichrist was to arise within the Roman kingdom, so his station is farther limited to the European part of that kingdom, or to the *Western empire*, properly so called.

This observation (which is not mine, but Sir Isaac Newton's) is the better worth making, because, in fact, the papal sovereignty never extended farther than the Western provinces; at least, could never gain a firm and permanent footing in the countries, which lie East of the Mediterranean sea. But, whether you admit this interpretation, or not, it is still clear that Antichrist was to arise somewhere within the

SERMON XI.

limits of the Roman empire. In what *part* of that empire he was to make his appearance, we certainly gather from

II. A SECOND prophetical note or character of this power, which is, *That his seat and throne was to be the city of Rome itself.*

The prophet Daniel acquaints us only that the power we call Antichristian, would spring up from *among* the ruins of the fourth, or Roman kingdom: But St. John, in the *Revelations*, fixes his residence in the *capital city* of that kingdom. For, when, in one of his visions, he had been shewn a portentous *beast with seven heads and ten horns, and a woman arrayed in purple,* riding upon him, an Angel is made to interpret this symbolic vision in the following words—*The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth—and the ten horns, which thou sawest, are ten kings—and the woman, which thou sawest, is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth*[c].

Words cannot be more determinate, than these. The *woman,* that rides this BEAST, that

[c] Rev. xvii. 3, 4. 9. 12. 18.

is, the fourth empire, in its last state of *ten horns*, or divided into ten kingdoms, is that Antichristian power, of which we are now inquiring. She is seated on *seven hills*, nay, she is *that great city, which reigneth* [that is, in St. John's time which *reigned*] over the *kingdoms of the earth.* Rome, then, is the throne of Antichrist, or is that city, which shall one day be Antichristian. There is no possibility of evading the force of these terms.

It hath been said, that Constantinople, too, was situated on seven hills. It may be so: But Constantinople did not, in the time of this vision, *reign over the kings of the earth.* Besides, if its *dominion* had not been mentioned, *the city on seven hills* is so characteristic of Rome, that the name itself could not have pointed it out more plainly: As must be evident to all those, who recollect, what the Latin writers have said on this subject.

The—*septem domini montes*—of one [f] poet is well known; and seems the abridgement of a still more famous line in another [g]—

Septem urbs alta jugis, toto quæ præsidet orbi:

[f] Martial. l. iv. ep. 64. [g] Propert. l. III. ix. 57.

SERMON XI.

To which, St. John's idea of a *woman, seated on seven hills, and reigning over the kings of the earth,* so exactly corresponds, that one sees no difference between the poet and the prophet; except that the *latter* personifies his idea, as the genius of the prophetic style required.

But a passage in Virgil is so much to our purpose, that it merits a peculiar attention. This poet, in the most finished of his works, had been celebrating the praises of a country life, which he makes the source and origin of the Roman greatness.

Hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini;
Hanc Remus et frater: *sic* fortis Etruria crevit:
Scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma [h].

The encomium, we see, is made with that gradual pomp, which is familiar to Virgil. And the last line (from its majestic simplicity, the noblest, perhaps, in all his writings) one would naturally expect should close the description. Yet he adds, to the surprize, and, I believe, to the disappointment of most readers,

[h] Georg. l. ii. ver. 532.

Septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces. SERMON XI.

Had we found this passage in any other of the Latin poets, we should have been apt to question the judgment of the writer; and to suspect, that, in attempting to rise upon himself, he had fallen, unawares, into an evident anti-climax. But the correct elegance of Virgil's manner, and his singular talent in working up an image, by just degrees, to the precise point of perfection, may satisfy us, that he had his reason for going on, where we might expect him to stop; which reason can be no other, than that the *seven hills* were necessary to complete his description of the imperial city[i]. To an ancient Roman, the circumstance of its *situation* was, of all others, the most august and characteristic; and Rome itself was not Rome, till it was contemplated under this idea.

There was ground enough, then, for saying, "that the *name* of Rome could not have pointed out the city *more plainly*." But I go farther, and take upon me to assert, That the *periphrasis* is even more precise, and less equivocal, than the *proper name* would have

[i] Compare Æn. vi. ver. 776. &c.

SERMON XI.

been, if inserted in the prophecy. For *Rome*, so called, might have stood, like Sodom, or Babylon, simply for an idolatrous City. But the city, *seated on seven hills*, and *reigning over the earth*, is the city of Rome itself, and excludes, by the peculiarity of these attributes, any other application.

Nor is it any objection to the remark, now made, that this city, whatever it be, is described by *another* circumstance, not peculiar to Rome, indeed scarce applicable to it, I mean that of its being *seated on many waters*[j]. For these *waters* are not given as a mark of Rome's *natural*, but *political* situation: as the prophetic style might lead one to expect, if the sacred writer had not taken care to prevent all mistake by assuring us, in so many words, That *the waters, where the whore sitteth, are* PEOPLES, AND MULTITUDES, AND NATIONS, AND TONGUES[k].

If it be, further, said, "That the *seven hills* may, likewise, admit a similar construction from the frequent use of *hills*, as emblems of *power*, in hieroglyphic writing, and therefore in prophetic description," the remark is very

j Rev. xvii. 1. k Ibid. ver. 15.

just: but then, unluckily, there is no such explanation of the *seven hills*, as we have of the *waters*, from the prophet himself; while yet it could not escape him, that such explanation was more than commonly necessary in this case, to prevent the reader from applying the *seven hills* to the best-known city in the world, then subsisting in all its glory, and universally acknowledged by this distinctive character of its situation.

Should it, lastly, be alledged, "That the explanation is subjoined to the figure, for that the prophet adds immediately in the following verse—*and there are seven kings*—meaning, that the *seven hills*, just mentioned, were to be taken as emblems only of *seven kings*," I reply, that the *seven hills*, in the figurative sense of the term, *hills*, naturally suggested, and elegantly introduce, the *seven kings*; but that the *former*, nevertheless, are clearly to be distinguished from the *latter*. For it is not said—*and the seven hills are seven kings*—as it was before said—*the seven heads are seven hills*—but—AND *there are seven kings*—plainly advancing a step further in the prophecy, and pointing out a new characteristic distinction of the seven-hilled city, arising from

SERMON XI.

the different forms of Government, through which it had passed.

The truth is (as Mr. Mede well observes [l]) *the seven heads of the beast*, are a DOUBLE TYPE: *first*, they signify the *seven hills*, on which the city is placed; and, *then*, the *seven kings*, or governments, to which it had been subject; but still *on* those seven hills, for which reason the same type is made to signify both: But, if the type had been designed to carry a *single* sense, and *kings* had been that sense, as explicatory of *hills*, it had been very preposterous to give the *interpretation* of the type, and then to *interpret* the interpretation, unless the expression had been so guarded as to convey this purpose in the most distinct manner. As it is now put, there are manifestly TWO SENSES, and ONE TYPE [m].

[l] *Septem* BESTIÆ *capita*, duplex typus: primò, septem montes seu colles sunt, super quos urbs Bestiæ metropolis sita est; deinde, septem quoque, idque in iisdem (quod unitas typi denotat) Collibus, Regum seu Dynastarum successivorum ordines. Works, p. 524.

[m] The whole passage in the original stands thus — αἱ ἑπτὰ κεφαλαὶ, ἕξη εἰσὶν ἑπτὰ, ὅπυ ἡ γυνὴ κάθηται ἐπ' αὐτῶν, καὶ βασιλεῖς ἑπτά εἰσιν — of which the following is the literal translation — The SEVEN HEADS are *seven hills*, where the woman sitteth upon them, AND are *seven kings* — Every one sees that the connective particle, AND, refers to *heads*, and not to *hills*.

On the whole, there can be no doubt concerning *the great city on seven hills*. It can be no other, than the city of Rome itself: In other words, the Antichristian, is a *Roman Power*.

Still, this Roman power, for any thing that hath hitherto appeared, may be a *Pagan* and *Civil* power. But

III. The prophecies seem very clearly to point it out to us, *as an* ECCLESIASTICAL and, in name and pretence, at least, *a* CHRISTIAN *power*.

To begin again with the prophet, Daniel. He tells us, that the Horn which shall *arise after*, and from *among*, the ten horns, that is, the Antichristian kingdom, as before explained, shall be DIVERSE from the ten kingdoms, out of which it shall arise[n]. "But a kingdom may be *diverse* from other kingdoms, in various respects." Without doubt. And, therefore, we cannot certainly conclude from this single text, that the *diversity*, mentioned, will consist in its being a spiritual kingdom. Yet,

[n] Dan. vii. 24.—The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall arise after them, and He shall be *diverse* from the first—

SERMON XI.

if ye reflect that this *diversity* is given, as the characteristic mark of the Antichristian kingdom; that, although there may be other and smaller differences between kingdoms, the greatest and most signal is that which subsists between a temporal and spiritual power; nay, that Government, as such, is, and can only be, of two sorts, civil and spiritual, as corresponding to the two constituent parts of *man*, (the subject of all government in this world,) the Soul and the Body: Taking, I say, these considerations along with you, ye cannot esteem it a very harsh and violent interpretation, if, without looking any farther, we incline to think that this *diversity* of regimen, so emphatically pointed out, respects that great and essential difference in human government, *only*. At least, it will be admitted, that, if, from other and more express testimonies, the government of Antichrist appear to be a spiritual government, we shall, then, be authorized to put such a construction on Daniel's prophecy, as will reach the full force and import of his expression. Such a kingdom must be allowed to be eminently *diverse* from secular kingdoms. So that the harmony between the prophets on this subject will be clear and striking.

Now, such a testimony we seem to find in the Apostle, St. Paul; who, prophesying of *the man of Sin*, or Antichrist, to be revealed in the latter days, makes it a distinguishing part of his character, *That he* SITTETH IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD[o]. Consider the force of these words. A power, *seated in the temple of God*, can be nothing but a power suitable to that place, or a *spiritual* power: just as a power, *seated in the throne of Cæsar*, could only be interpreted of a *civil* power. SERMON XI.

Nor say, because the context runs thus — "that he, AS GOD, sitteth in the temple of God, SHEWING himself that he IS GOD — that therefore it only means his claiming *divine honours*: a degree of blasphemy, very applicable to a *civil* power." This objection has clearly no force: because his *sitting in the temple of God* was the very *means* (if we rightly apply this prophecy) by which the man of sin rose to that abominable pre-eminence. It was by virtue of his *spiritual*, that he assumed a *divine* character. So that the phrase — *as God* — and that other — *shewing himself that he is God* — sets before us, indeed, the extravagant height to which the man of sin

[o] 2 Thess. ii. 4.

SERMON XI.

aspired, and to which he ascended; but, no way invalidates the conclusion from his sitting in the temple of God—that he was a *spiritual power*. Rather, we see the propriety of this conclusion: because the text, thus understood, suggests the *way* in which the man of sin accomplished his blasphemous purpose: His *success* arose, from his *station* in the temple. On the other hand, a power *sitting in the throne of Cæsar*, might sit there *as God*, and might *shew himself that he was God* (as many of the Roman Emperors did:) So that the clause—*sitting in the temple of God*—has evidently no peculiar fitness, as applied to the usurpation of divine honours by a *civil tyrant;* whereas we see it has that fitness, when applied to a *spiritual* tyrant. The context therefore proves nothing against the interpretation, here proposed and defended.

But, what is this *temple of God?* The temple at Jerusalem, it will be said; the only temple, so called, then subsisting in the world [p].

p See Grotius, on the place: who applies this prophecy to Caius Cæsar, and thinks it was fulfilled when that Emperor commanded his statue to be placed in the temple of Jerusalem. A strange conjecture! which many writers, and very lately an excellent prelate, has well confuted. Bishop Newton's *Diss. on the Prophecies,* Vol. ii. p. 373.

Admit this to be the literal sense of the words. Yet ye remember so much of what hath been said concerning the prophetic style, as not to think it strange, that the literal sense should involve in it another, a *mystical* meaning. And this, without any uncertainty whatsoever. For so, the term, *Jew*, means a *Christian*; the term, *David*, means *Christ*; the *incense* of the temple-service, means the *prayers* of Christians; plainly and confessedly so, in numberless instances. Agreeably to this analogical use of Jewish terms, in the style of the prophets, *the temple of God*, nay *the temple of Jerusalem*[q] (if that had been the expression) must, in all reason, be interpreted of the *Christian church*, and could not, in the prophetic language, be interpreted otherwise. When, therefore, Antichrist is said to *sit in the temple of God*, it is the same thing as if it had been said of him, *That he sitteth*, or ruleth, *in the church of Christ*. Now, substitute these words — *the church of Christ* —

[q] *Hierosolyma* in scriptis prophetarum occurrit ut emblema alterius cujusdam *Hierosolymæ*, mysticè sic dicendæ; quæ *Hierosolyma* non potest esse urbs quædam in montibus Zione & Acra constructa, qualis fuit antiqua illa; sed oportet esse *rem spiritualem*, in quâ attributa antiquæ Hierosolymæ *mystice* demonstrentur.

VITRINGA, *Apocalyps. Exp. & Illustr.* p. 762.

SERMON XI.

in the room of those other words—*the temple of God;* and see, if St. Paul, supposing his purpose had been to express a spiritual power in opposition to a civil; see, I say, if St. Paul could have conveyed that purpose more plainly.

Still, we have another, and, if possible, a more decisive testimony in the *Revelations.* For, among the different views, which St. John gives us of Antichrist, in so many distinct visions, one is set before us in the following manner—*And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a Dragon*[r]. Now, if we had known nothing more of these symbols, than what the obvious qualities of the animals themselves suggested to us, we could only have inferred, that this ruling power (for that is the idea conveyed by the term, *Beast)* would put on the appearance of a gentle and pacific administration: I say, the *appearance;* for what its *real* character was to be, is clearly enough expressed in what follows, that this lamb-like beast *spake as a Dragon.* But, when we further reflect, that *horns,* in the prophetic style, are the emblems of *power,*

[r] Rev. xiii. 11.

and that a *Lamb* is the peculiar, the *appropriated* symbol of Christ, *the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*[s], and is constantly so employed throughout this whole prophecy of the Revelations, we must, of necessity, conclude that *a beast with the horns of a lamb* can only be a state or person, pretending to such powers, as Christ exercised, and his Religion authoriseth; that is, powers, *not of this world*, but purely spiritual. SERMON XI.

The other symbol of a *Dragon*, confirms this conclusion. For a *Dragon*, in the prophecies, is the known symbol of the old Roman Government in its pagan, persecuting state. When, therefore, it is said that the beast *spake as a Dragon*, the meaning is, That Antichrist should assume the highest tone of civil authority in promoting his tyrannous purposes, though he cloked his fierce pretensions under the meek semblance of a spiritual character. Taken together, these two symbols speak as plainly, as symbolic terms can speak, That Antichrist was to be a *religious person*, acting in the spirit of a *secular tyrant*. So exactly is he characterised by the poet Mantuan, addressing himself to one of the Popes —

[s] John i. 29.

SERMON XI.

Ense potens *gemino*, cujus vestigia adorant
Cæsar et aurato vestiti murice reges.

On the whole, I leave it to be considered, whether, when the prophecies pronounce of Antichrist, that he should be, a power *diverse* from all others—that he should *sit in the temple of God*—and that he should have *the horns of a lamb*—I leave it, I say, to your consideration, whether it be not plain that this extraordinary power, a Roman power, and residing at Rome, was to be a *Christian and Ecclesiastical*, and not a *Pagan and Civil* power.

IV. Another obvious character of Antichrist, or rather, *complication* of characters, is that triple brand, impressed upon him, of a *tyrannical, intolerant, and idolatrous*, power.

The prophets hold him up to us, as *reigning*, or exercising an oppressive and supereminent dominion, *over the kings of the earth*, that is, of the Western empire[t]; as *making war with the lamb, and the saints who receive not his mark in their foreheads*[u], that is, persecuting good and conscientious Christians, who refuse to wear the badge of Antichrist, and to

t Dan. vii. 8. 20. Rev. xvii. 1. 16, 17.

u Dan. vii. 21. Rev. xvii. 14. xiii. 7. 16.

SERMON XI.

serve under him; and, as another *Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth* [x], that is, as polluted himself with the grossest idolatry, and as corrupting the nations with the same prophane worship.

But these marks, it will be said, have been found upon so many powers, which have appeared in the world, that they cannot be given as the *distinctive* marks of *one*, that is, of the Papal Power: Nay, the Bishop of Meaux goes further, and attempts to shew, by a very refined argument, that the very *terms* of *whoredom* and *fornication*, in which the *last* of these marks, I mean, IDOLATRY, is set forth by the prophet in the *book of Revelations*, make it impossible for us to apply that mark to Rome Christian.

Let us see, then, *first*, what force there is in the criticism of this learned Prelate.

That *whoredom*, or *fornication*, in the language of scripture, means *idolatry*, is agreed on all hands, and cannot be disputed: Whether the figurative use of this term arose from observing, how constantly that pollution at-

[x] Rev. xvii. 5.

SERMON XI.

tended idolatrous worship; or how fitly a communication with false gods may be compared with that unlawful commerce: Whatever be the ground of the analogy, it is clear to a demonstration that *whoredom* is but another name for *idolatry*, which, under this idea, is very frequently charged upon the Jews by the ancient prophets.

Sometimes, however, (without doubt, to aggravate the charge) the idolatry of the Jews is considered in the light of *adultery*, that is, of infidelity to the God of Israel; to whom, as to her proper Lord and *Husband*, the Jewish nation had, by express stipulation, and in the most solemn manner, contracted herself.

But, notwithstanding this promiscuous application of the terms, *fornication*, and *adultery*, to the idolatry of the Jews in the ancient prophecies, it hath been remarked by the Bishop of Meaux, "That Babylon, or Rome, in the Revelations, is constantly and uniformly spoken of as a *whore*, and not as an *adulteress*: whence he concludes, that this charge is brought against Pagan Rome only, and not Christian Rome. For, why, he asks, is so much care taken not to impute *adultery* to idolatrous Rome, if it had been a Christian

city? when its polluting itself with this crime, contrary to the most express engagements, which Christians take upon themselves, of fidelity to the only true God, might justly deserve, and, in propriety, may seem to require, this opprobrious charge, rather than that other lighter one of *fornication*; whereas, if Pagan Rome be here meant, its idolatry could only be set forth under the idea of *fornication*, and not of *adultery*[y]."

[y] Le saint apôtre a bien pris garde de ne pas nommer la prostituée, dont il parle, une adultere, μοιχάδα, μοιχαλίδα, mais une femme publique — sans jamais avoir employé le mot d'*adultere*; tant il étoit attentif à éviter l'idée d'une épouse infidelle. — Loin de marquer la Prostituée, comme une *Eglize corrompuë*, nous avons montré clairement qu'il a pris des idées toutes contraires à celles-là, puis qu'au lieu de produire une *Jerusalem infidelle*, ou du moins une *Samarie*, autrefois partie du peuple saint, comme il auroit fait s'il avoit voulu nous représenter une eglise corrompuë, il nous propose une *Babylone*, qui jamais n'a eté nommée dans l'alliance de Dieu. Nous avons aussi remarqué qu'il n'avoit jamais donné à la Prostituée le titre d'épouse infidelle ou repudiée; mais que par tout il s'étoit servi du terme de *fornication*, et de tous ceux qui revenoient au même sens. Je sçais que ces mots se confondent quelquefois avec celui d'*adultere*, mais *le fort du raisonnement consiste en ce que de propos deliberé* Saint Jean *evite toûjours ce dernier mot* qui marqueroit *la foi violée, le mariage souillé, et l'alliance rompuë*, &c. — *L'Apocalypse avec une Explication: par Messire Jaques Benigne Bossuet,*

SERMON XI.

Now, although, as I observed, the idolatrous Jews are frequently treated by their prophets, as *fornicators*, as well as *adulterers*, nay, are much more frequently [z] represented under the *former* idea, than the *latter*; and although it be therefore true, that *fornication* is not necessarily, and exclusively, to be understood of Pagan idolatry, but may well be applied to Christian idolaters, as it was to the Jewish; yet the force of the learned objector's argument will not be obviated by this observation only. For the stress of it lies in this, "That the idolatry of Rome in the Revelations is *every where*, that is, purposely, termed *fornication* (to insinuate to us, that the charge is directed against a Pagan City, and not a Christian Church), and *no where*, that is, purposely again, called *adultery*."

Evêque de Meaux. PREF. 26, 29. AVERTISEMENT, p. 321—323. Par. 1690, 12°.

[z] The reason I take to be, That *fornication*, that is, vague lust, and general prostitution, served best to express the unbridled and indiscriminate passion of the Jews for the dæmon-worship of their neighbours: Whereas the crime of *adultery*, though of a blacker dye, and, in that view, more proper to expose the malignity of their offence, does not convey the same ideas of universal pollution, being usually committed, *because* it is so criminal, with more distinction and restraint.

SERMON XI.

The objection is extremely ingenious; and, so far as I know, hath been, hitherto, unanswered. Yet, if any good reason can be assigned why the prophet should thus studiously prefer the term, *fornication*, to that of *adultery*, in describing the idolatry of Christian Rome, notwithstanding those terms be used indifferently by the Jewish prophets, when they reprove the idolatry of their own countrymen, the Bishop of Meaux would himself acknowledge, that his objection falls to the ground.

Now such a reason offers itself to us in the EMBLEM, under which St. John chuses to represent his idolatrous society. This emblem is, *Babylon;* a Pagan idolatrous city; to which the idea of *fornication* may be colourably, and hath, in fact, been, applied[a], in order to express the transgression of the law of nature, in its idolatrous worship: But to such a city, *adultery*, could in no proper sense, be applied; because, it had never entered into any close engagement, or *marriage-contract*, as it were, with the God of heaven.

This being admitted, we see the reason, why Rome Christian is taxed as a *whore* simply, and not as an adulteress. For what had

[a] Isaiah xxiii. 16, 17. Nahum iii. 4.

SERMON XI.

been improperly said of the *type*, cannot, on the principles of decorum, be transferred to the *anti-type*. If Babylon be only a *harlot*, she is a harlot still, and nothing more, when she stands for Rome, whether Pagan, or Christian. The concinnity of the figure, and the just correspondence of the thing signified to the sign, demands the observance of this rule; which cannot be violated without manifest absurdity and confusion.

"But why then, it is asked, was such an emblem employed? Why was not Jerusalem, or Samaria (of which *adultery* might be predicated) rather chosen, than Babylon, for the type, or representation of *idolatrous Christian Rome?*"

The reason, again, is obvious. It was, because Babylon was the *first* of all idolatrous cities; and the *fittest* [b] to emblematize the enormous guilt, or to set in full light the extensive influence, of idolatrous Rome. For

[b] —*for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols.* Jer. l. 38. Again: *Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad.* Jer. li. 7. Compare Rev. xvii.—*the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.*

each, in its turn, was *the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*; the *former* corrupting the *heathen* world with her fornication, and the latter, the *Christian*.

When therefore for this, or the like reason, Babylon was made the emblem of Christian Rome, the prophet was obliged to retain the idea of fornication, only, and not to interpose that of adultery, through the whole tenour of his application.

It may, further, be worth observing, that *pagan* idolatry is, for the most part, exposed by the ancient prophets under the notion of LYES, or LYING VANITIES[c]; and very rarely, I think in no more than one or two short passages, under that of *fornication*. For vague lust was so generally practised in the heathen world, and the law of nature, condemning that vice, so little known, or respected by it, that the metaphor would not have conveyed to a Pagan idolater the atrocious nature of his crime. The Mosaic Law, on the other hand, interdicting fornication in the severest terms, and requiring that *there should be no whore of the daughters of Israel*[d], the guilt of idolatry

[c] Mr. Mede Works, p. 49. [d] Deut. xxiii. 17.

SERMON XI.

was very forcibly, as well as naturally, represented to a Jew, under that idea.

Accordingly, we find, that the prophets every where, and in whole pages, employ this figure, when they address themselves to Jewish idolaters. Whence it may seem, that, although there be sufficient authorities to justify the prophet St. John in considering his emblematic Babylon under the idea of a *harlot*, yet he would not have prosecuted even this inferior charge of *fornication* so far as he has done, and in so many parts of his prophecy, if his purpose had not been to apply it to a *believing*, and not a Pagan city. If the mystical Babylon be *Christian* Rome, we see the force and propriety of this representation; which had clearly been less apt, if Pagan Rome, according to the Bishop of Meaux, had been intended by the prophet.

We see then, in both ways, why Rome is not an *adulteress* in the Revelations; and why she is so emphatically, a *harlot*. The type employed forbad the *former* charge, though the anti-type be *Rome Christian*: The *latter* charge had not been so much laboured, if the anti-type had been *Rome Pagan*.

Thus, the edge of this acute objection is entirely taken off, and the execution, it was to make on the Protestant system, prevented.

To return, now, to the consideration of our *three* marks. These marks, it is said, agree to so many other powers, besides that of the Papacy, that they cannot be made the peculiar, distinctive characters of Christian Rome. And, without doubt, considered merely in themselves, they cannot. But, having already understood that the power, thus stigmatized, is a power seated in the *seven-hilled* city, and that too, an *ecclesiastical* power, one sees clearly that, if the prophecies have hitherto received their accomplishment in any degree, these marks can only be sought in Papal Rome, and must be the proper, exclusive characters of that power. I say, *one sees this*; but, it must be owned, not without amazement, That a species of government, calling itself Christian, and professing to model itself on the example of the *Lamb*, on the pure and simple principles of the Gospel, should yet be all over stained with those specific vices, which Christianity most abhors — the utmost pride of secular domination — the most relentless zeal against the rights of conscience — and, what is still more incredible, the most blasphe-

SERMON XI.

mous idolatry. The accumulated infamy of these crimes struck the prophet, St. John, so forcibly, that, on the sight of this portentous monster, exhibited to him in the vision, *he wondered*, as himself expresses it, *with great admiration* [e].

But, strange as this vision appeared to the sacred *prophet*, the Papal history is found to realize all the wonders of it: And, backward as *we* may be to interpret this vision of a church, professedly Christian, that church herself is so little scandalized at the imputation of these crimes, that she is ready to avow them all; the *two first*, directly and openly; and the *last*, when set in a certain light, and explained in her own manner. In short, she prides herself in the *extent of her sway* [f], and

[e] Rev. xvii. 6 θαῦμα μέγα.

[f] Not held of the civil power, or acknowledged to be so held, but usurped upon it, and insolently directed against it; as is well known from ecclesiastical history. *The Pope is not Antichrist: God forbid!* (says the good Abbé Fleury, with a zeal becoming a member of the Papal communion.) *But neither is he impeccable, nor has he an absolute authority in the church over all things both temporal and spiritual —Le pape n'est pas l'Antichrist; à Dieu ne plaise; mais il n'est pas impeccable, ni monarque absolu dans l'eglise pour le temporel et pour le spirituel* [4ème disc. sur l'hist. ecclesiastique, p. 173. Par 1747, 12°.]

the *fire of her zeal* g, and only quibbles with us about the meaning of the term, *idolatry*.

The Pope, he says, *is not an absolute monarch in the church over all things temporal and spiritual:* That is, he *ought not* to arrogate to himself the power of an absolute monarch; for that the pope assumes to be such a monarch, and, in fact, exercised this supreme monarchical power in the church, through many ages, the learned and candid writer had indisputably shewn, in the discourse, whence these words are quoted. But now this *monarchical sovereignty in all things temporal, as well as spiritual,* is certainly one prophetical note or character, by which the person or power, styled Antichristian, is distinguished. Let the Pope, then, be what he will, we are warranted by M. Fleury himself to conclude, that he hath, at least, this mark of Antichrist.

g In the *persecution of heretics*; which M. Bossuet regards as so little dishonourable to his communion, that he thinks it *a point not to be called in question* — calls the use of the sword in matters of religion, *an undoubted right* — and concludes, that *there is no illusion more dangerous than to consider* TOLERATION, *as a mark of the true Church* — *l'exercise de la puissance du glaive dans les matieres de la religion & de la conscience; chose, que ne pût être revoquée en doute — le droit est certain — il n'y a point d'illusion plus dangereuse que de donner* LA SOUFFRANCE *pour un caractere de vraye Eglise. Hist. des Var.* l. x. p. 51. Par. 1740, 12°.

Thus, this great doctor of the Catholic church, towards the close of the last century. And just now, another eminent writer of that communion very roundly defends the *murder* of the Bohemian martyrs at Constance, and (what is more provoking still) the *fraud and ill-faith*, through which the pious and tender-hearted *Fathers* of that council

SERMON XI.

To cut the matter short, then, and to keep clear of those endless debates concerning the worship of *Images*, of the *Cross*, and of the *Host* in the celebration of the Mass; debates, which a dextrous sophist may find means to carry on with a shew of argument, and with some degree of plausibility; To set aside, I say, all these topics, let it be observed, at once, That *idolatry*, in the scriptural sense of the word, is of *two sorts*, and consists either, 1. in giving the honour due to the one true God, as maker and governor of the world, to any other supposed, though subordinate god; Or, 2, in giving the honour due to Christ, as the sole mediator between God and Man, to any other supposed, though subordinate, mediator. The *former*, is the idolatry forbidden by the Jewish law, and by the law of Nature: The *latter*, is Christian idolatry, properly so called, and is

rushed to the perpetration of it. *M. Crevier, Hist. de l'Université de Paris*, t. iii. l. vi. p. 435, &c. Par. 1761, 12°.—Can it be worth while to spend words in fixing this charge of *intolerance* on the church of Rome, when her ablest advocates, as we see, even in our days, openly triumph in it? But, then, hath she forgotten who it was that the prophet *saw, drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*—Rev. xvii. 6? Alas, no: But she wonders, by what figure of speech *heretics* are called *Saints*; and *rebels to the Pope, Martyrs of Jesus*.

the abomination, prohibited and condemned, in so severe terms, by the law of the Gospel. SERMON XI.

Now, whether the *former* species of idolatry be chargeable on the church of Rome or not; and whether the *crime* of that species, may not be incurred by honouring the true object of worship, through the medium of some sensible image: Whatever, I say, be determined on these two points (which, for the present, shall be set aside) the *other* species of idolatry is, without all doubt, chargeable on any Christian church that shall adopt or acknowledge, in its religious addresses, another mediator, besides Christ Jesus.

But the church of Rome (I do not say, in the private writings of her divines, but) in the solemn forms of her ritual, *publicly professes*, and, by her canons and councils, *authoritatively enjoyns*, the worship of saints and angels, under the idea of mediators and intercessors: not indeed in exclusion of Christ, as *one*, or, if you will, as *chief* mediator, but in manifest defiance of his claim to be, the *sole* mediator. This charge is truly and justly brought against that Church, as it now stands, and hath stood, for many ages; and cannot,

SERMON XI.

by any subterfuge whatsoever, be evaded [h]. And therefore, to the other characters of *Pride*

[h] See Vitringa *Apocalyps. Exp.* p. 603, and the authors cited by him: But, above all, see Mr. Mede's exquisite and unanswerable discourse, entitled, *The Apostacy of the latter times.*

'Tis true, the Bishop of Meaux is pleased to divert himself with one part of this discourse; I mean, that part, which contains [ch. xvi. and xvii.] the learned writer's interpretation of Daniel's prophecy, concerning the Gods *Mahuzzim*. He finds something pleasant in this idea, or rather in this hard word, which he repeats so often, and in such a way, as if he thought the very sound of *Mahuzzim*, was enough to expose the comment and Commentator to contempt. *Hist. des Var.* l. xiii. p. 260, 261. But, after all, the ingenious Prelate would have done himself no discredit by being a little more serious in discussing an interpretation, which Sir Isaac Newton adopts without scruple [*Obs. on the prophecies of Daniel, &c.* p. 192]; and which, in mere respect to the prophet, he should, at least, have condescended to replace by some other and more reasonable interpretation. But it is the infirmity of this lively man, to be jocular *out of season*. Thus, again, he raillies Luther, for an assertion of his, delivered, it seems, with some assurance, and, in the form, as he pretends, of a prediction, *That the Papal power would speedily decline and come to nothing, in consequence of the Reformation.* The event, he says, has belied the prophet; the Pope still keeps his ground; and then (in an unlucky parenthesis) laughs to think, *how many others, besides Luther, will be dashed to pieces against this* STONE—*bien d'autres, que Luther, se briseront contre cette* PIERRE [*Var.* l. xiii. p. 244]. Now, if the glory of saying a good thing had not

and *Intolerance*, which she takes to herself with much complacency, she must, now, be content (whether she will or no) to have that of DÆMON-WORSHIP, or ANTICHRISTIAN IDOLATRY, fastened upon her.

Nor let the followers of that communion think to elude this charge, by saying, *That they only request the saints, as we commonly do any good man, to pray for them*[i]. False and disingenuous! *False*; because their breviaries and litanies shew, that they supplicate the saints to befriend them by their own inherent

infatuated this Catholic Bishop, could he have helped starting at his own comparison of a *stone*, as applied to Luther and the Reformation, when it might so naturally have put him in mind of that prophetical STONE, which shall one day *become a great mountain*, and *break in pieces a certain* IMAGE, *and stand for ever* [Dan. ii. 35. 44.]?

[i] L'Eglise, en nous enseignant qu'il est utile de prier les Saints, nous enseigne à les prier dans ce même esprit de charité, & selon cet ordre de société fraternelle qui nous porte à demander le secours de nos freres vivans sur la terre; & le Catechisme du Concile de Trente conclut de cette doctrine, que si la qualité de Mediateur, que l'ecriture donne à Jesus Christ, recevoit quelque préjudice de l'intercession des Saints qui regnent avec Dieu, elle n'en recevroit pas moins de l'intercession des fideles qui vivent avec nous.

M. BOSSUET, *Exposition de la doctrine de l'Eglise Catholique*, p. 17, 18. Paris, 1671.

SERMON XI.

power, or to intercede for them to the throne of God by virtue of their own personal merits [k], in blasphemous derogation to the all-atoning and incommunicable intercession of Jesus. *Disingenuous*, too; because they know very well, that the question is concerning unseen and heavenly mediators only, not men like ourselves, such as we live and converse with on earth; whom we only admonish of their duty, and to whom we only do ours, when we call upon them to exert an act of piety and common charity in praying for their fellow-christians. Our meaning is but that which the Apostle well expresses, when he would have us *consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works* [l]; and not at all to supplicate our Christian brethren as powerful intercessors, in whose meritorious virtues we confide, and to whom, as possessing a proper interest in the Almighty, by the worth of their own persons, we commit our dearest concerns, The forgiveness of our sins, and the salvation of our souls.

"But this, it will be said, is a very defective, and even unfair, account of the matter. We do more than admonish our brethren of their duty, when we sollicit their prayers for

[k] Vitringa, p. 603, 604. [l] Heb. x. 24.

us. We invite them directly, and formally, to *intercede* for us to the throne of Grace. We are allowed, nay encouraged, to lay a stress on their intercession; and, what is more, we are given to understand that such intercession, especially if it be made by good men, will have weight and influence in Heaven. What else is the meaning of the Apostle, when he assures us, *That the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* James v. 16.? And, if the prayer of *a righteous man*, much more the prayer of glorified saints and angels."

I have put the argument, I think, in all its force, and (because the advocates of the papal cause affect to think it unanswerable) shall examine it, with care.

"We apply to good Christians, or to those we esteem such, to intercede for us by their prayers to Heaven." We do so; and are encouraged in this application, by the *example*, and by the *directions* of the Apostles. For I shall not take advantage of what some have conceived to be the meaning of St. James, in the place alledged, where he attributes so much to the prayer of, a righteous man, That the prayer, there spoken of, is *the prayer of faith*,

SERMON XI.

or a spiritual gift miraculously conferred on the first teachers of the Gospel, and confined to their ministry: I will not, I say, take advantage of this gloss; because, whatever foundation it may seem to have in the context of that epistle, I allow it to be clear from other places of the New Testament [m], That the duty of Christians is to pray, that is, to *intercede*, for each other.

But then I desire it may be observed,

1. What difference there is between desiring good men to pray for us, in the Gospel sense of that duty; and desiring Saints and Angels to pray for us, in the sense of the papal rituals. We request those prayers, only as they shall be offered up in the name, and through the merits, of the great, and properly speaking, sole intercessor; and we look for no effect from them, but on that condition. The Church of Rome addresses herself to Saints and Angels, as *intercessors*, by, what we may call, their own right, by virtue of their own inherent sanctity: Or, rather, she applies to them directly, as to *Saviours*, for their proper and immediate help, and expects it from the supposed privilege of their rank, or merits,

[m] 1 Thess. v. 25. 1 Tim. ii. 1. and elsewhere, *passim*.

independently of their *prayers*, or, at least, of the *manner* in which those prayers shall be presented through the name of Jesus. The formal words of their Litanies shew, that such is their meaning.

But they will say, that this condition of interceding, or saving, through the merits of Christ, is implied, though not expressed. I reply then,

2. That, admitting it to be so, there is, yet, the widest difference between *praying* to Saints and Angels to pray for us, though in the Gospel forms of intercession; and merely *requesting* good men to pray for us, in those forms. The *latter* address is made in a way remote from all appearance of idolatry, and free from the suspicion of it: The *former*, is preferred in the *place*, at the *time*, with the *posture*, in the *language*, in short, with all the circumstances and formalities of divine worship.

3. I observe, that, when we ask the prayers of men, we know that they hear our address to them: We cannot even suppose thus much of Saints and Angels, without ascribing to them the incommunicable attributes of the Almighty.

SERMON XI.

Still, it may be insisted, That prayers, whether offered up to God by men, or glorified spirits, are however to be considered in the light of *Intercessions*; and that therefore, so far as we combat the practice of saint-worship on that ground, Protestants, as well as Papists, when they employ the prayers of others, are guilty of idolatry.

This, in truth, is the hinge, on which the question turns: And, to shew the difference of the two cases, palpably and clearly, I say,

Fourthly, and lastly, That the Gospel, in permitting, or rather in commanding us to ask the prayers of each other, justifies this sort of intercession, and absolves it from the blame and guilt of idolatry. It gives a sanction to this mode of mediating with God by his Saints, on earth; and does not regard it as a practice that interferes with the mediatorial office of Jesus, in Heaven.

The same Gospel, on the contrary, (I inquire not, for what reasons) says not a word, from which we can infer, that any such address is directed, or permitted, to be made to Angels or Spirits. It even condemns all addresses of this kind, under the opprobrious name of un-

authorized, or WILL-WORSHIP[n]. Though we be allowed, then, to have good men, in some sense, for our mediators or intercessors on earth, we are not allowed to have any mediator or intercessor in the tabernacle of heaven, but Jesus, the great high priest of Christians, only. This last sort of intercession, by Angels and glorified Saints, is against the spirit and letter of our religion. It is a practice, which, not being enjoined, is forbidden; which, being disallowed, is reprobated. In a word, It entrenches on the incommunicable honour and prerogatives of the great, the appointed, the sole Mediator in Heaven, seated at God's right hand, *who ever liveth to make intercession for us*[o]. It sets up new mediators, without, and against his leave: It is, then, un-christian, and *idolatrous*. SERMON XI.

Thus at length, I suppose, it appears indisputably, That we are neither unreasonable, nor uncharitable, in charging IDOLATRY, as well as the other two anti-christian vices of *pride*, and *intolerance*, to the account of papal Rome.

V. The last prophetic mark of Antichrist, which I shall have time to point out to you,

[n] Coloss. ii. 18. [o] Heb. vii. 25.

SERMON XI.

and what perhaps you may esteem the most material of all, is, *The* TIME *in which that power is said to make its appearance in the world.*

It hath been already observed[p], that the *chronology* of the prophecies is, for the most part, not defined with that exactness, which we expect in historical compositions. It is commonly expressed in terms that may be interpreted with some latitude; or, when the date is more precisely delivered, we are still at a loss, in some respect or other, before the event, in what manner to form our calculation. However, the expression is not so loose and vague, but that we may clearly apprehend *about* what time the predicted event will come to pass.

Thus, for instance, the season of Christ's *coming into the world* was fixed by such circumstances as these—that it should be before the total dissolution of the Jewish state—or while the second temple was yet standing: And, when it was determinately foretold to be after the expiration of *seventy weeks, from the going forth of the commandment to return*

[p] Page 228—231, and p. 255.

and to build Jerusalem, still, besides the prophetic and somewhat obscure sense of the word *weeks,* we cannot beforehand calculate exactly *when* these weeks commence[q], or in what term they are to be accomplished. Yet, notwithstanding these uncertainties, the Jews saw very clearly, and, from them, the rest of the world conceived an expectation, that the person predicted was to appear in that age, or *about* that time, in which he did appear, and which, from the tenour of the prophecies, they had computed would be the time of his appearance.

In like manner, the season of Antichrist's appearance in the world is left to be collected from general intimations; and, when the du-

[q] "Whatsoever time of Messiah's appearing Almighty "God pointed out by Daniel's LXX Weeks, yet I believe "not that any Jew before the event, could infallibly de- "sign the time without some latitude; because they could "not know infallibly where to pitch the head of their ac- "counts, until the event discovered it: yet in some lati- "tude they might." *Mede, Works,* p. 757.

And so in other instances. "I do not believe that the "Jews themselves could certainly tell from which of their "*three captivities* to begin that reckoning of LXX years, "whose end should bring their return from Babylon, un- "til the event assured them thereof."

Mede, Works, p. 662.

SERMON XI.

ration of his tyranny is limited to *twelve hundred and sixty days*, besides that the expression, as before, is ænigmatical, we have no means of fixing the commencement of that period so precisely, but that some doubts may arise about it, till the accomplishment of the prophecy shall give light and certainty to the computation. Yet still, as in the former case, we have such *data* to proceed upon in calculating the reign of Antichrist, as may let us see *about* what time it was to be expected.

Thus much being premised, I have now only to remind you of what the prophets expressly declare concerning the rise of Antichrist. The eldest of these, the prophet Daniel, says it was to be in the time of the *fourth* kingdom, that is, of the Roman; which, for the convenience of the prophetic calculations, is considered as subsisting, though in a new form, under the ten kings, among whom it was to be divided. He further tells us, that Antichrist was to arise from *among*, and *after*, the ten kings; that is, we are to look for him *then*, (and not before) when the Roman empire has undergone that change of government[r].

[r] Dan. vii.

Next, St. Paul, it seems, had told the Thessalonians, what it was that, for a time, prevented the appearance of Antichrist: But that information hath not been transmitted to us. However, he says to them—*Ye know* WHAT *with-holdeth that he might be revealed in his time:* and further adds, HE, *who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way*[s].

Now, by putting these passages together, and by comparing them with the predictions of Daniel, not we of these later times only, before whom *the man of sin* is supposed to be evidently displayed, but the early fathers of the church, long before the events happened to which these prophetic notices could be applied, clearly saw, or at least generally conjectured, that the impediment, here mentioned, was the then subsisting power of the Cæsarean government; which, they said, was first to be taken away, and then Antichrist would be revealed[t].

Lastly, the Apostle St. John not only confirms the prophecies of Daniel, that Antichrist should arise out of the ten kings, who

[s] 2 Thess. ii. 6, 7.

[t] P. 182—184. But see especially Mede's Works, p. 657.

SERMON XI.

were to have the western empire shared out among them, but adds this remarkable circumstance, That he should RIDE the ten kings[u]; which implies, that he should *co-exist* with them: And it further appears, that he was to receive his whole power from them, and was finally to be destroyed by them.

Now, turn to the history of the *fourth* kingdom, and see how it corresponds to these prophecies. Observe, when the western empire under its Cæsarean head, was taken away; how it was, afterwards, dismembered by the northern nations; by what degrees it fell at length, into *ten*, that is, *many* distinct, independent kingdoms; at what time this partition was made, or rather fully settled and completed. From this time, and not before, you are to look for Antichrist, now gradually rearing himself up among the ten kings; and at length, in a condition, by the power, which they gave to him, to *ride*, that is, to direct and govern them. From this time, again, compute the 1260 years, the predicted period of his government; and, keeping your eye all along on the ecclesiastical and civil state of our western world (the predicted theatre of all

[u] Rev. xvii. 7.

these transactions) see, if you can help concluding, I do not say at what precise time, but *about* what time, Antichrist appeared; see, if the *commencement* of his reign be not so far determined as that you may be certain of its being long since past; and see, if very much, at least, of that allotted *period*, through which his dominion was to continue, according to the prophecies, be not, by the evident attestation of history, now run out.

To DRAW, then, what hath been said on the several marks of Antichrist, to a point. Consider, within *what part* of the world, he was to appear; in *what seat* or throne, he was to be established; of *what kind*, his sovereignty was to be; with *what attributes*, he was to be invested; in *what season*, or *about what time*, and for *how long a time*, he was to reign and prosper: Consider these FIVE obvious characters of Antichrist, which the prophets have distinctly set forth, and which, from them, I have successively held up to you: And, then, compare them with the correspondent characters, which you find inscribed, by the pen of authentic history, on a certain power, sprung up in the West; seated in the city of Rome; calling himself the Vicar of Christ; yet *full of names of blasphemy*, that is, stigmatized with

SERMON XI.

those crimes, which Christianity, as such, holds most opprobrious, the crimes of tyrannic dominion, of persecution, and even Idolatry; and lastly, now subsisting in the world, though with evident symptoms of decay, after a long reign, whose rise and progress can be traced, and whose duration, hitherto, is uncontradicted by any prophecy: Put, I say, all these correspondent marks together, and see if they do not furnish, if not an absolute demonstration, yet a high degree of probability, that apostate papal Rome is the very Antichrist foretold.

At least, you will admit that these correspondencies are signal enough to merit your attention, and even to justify your pains in looking further into so curious and interesting a subject. Ye will say to yourselves, That the prophecies concerning Antichrist deserve at least to be considered with care, since in so many striking particulars, they appear, on the face of them, to have been completed.

This *conclusion*, it is presumed, is a reasonable one: And the end of this discourse will be answered, if ye are, at length, prevailed upon to *draw* this conclusion.

SERMON XII.

USES OF THIS INQUIRY INTO THE PROPHECIES.

REV. xxii. 7.

Behold, I come quickly: Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

BEFORE we engage in a work of time and difficulty, we naturally ask, "CUI BONO, to what considerable end and purpose, are our labours to be referred?"

Although it may, then, be presumed, that enough hath been said on the prophecies to excite a reasonable desire of looking further

SERMON XII.

into them, and even to produce a general persuasion, that they have been, or may be, understood; yet, it may quicken your attention to this argument, and support your industry in the prosecution of it, to set before you the USES, which may result from a full and final conviction (if such should be the issue of your inquiries), That these prophecies are not intelligible only, but have, in many instances, been rightly applied, and clearly fulfilled.

These USES are very many. I shall collect, only, *two or three* of the more important, for your consideration.

Though every period of prophecy be instructive, that which takes in the great events and revolutions, which have come to pass in the *Christian Church*, is, for obvious reasons, more especially interesting to us, who live in these latter ages of the world.

Of the numerous predictions, contained in either Testament, which, it is presumed, respect these events, the most considerable by far, because the most minute and circumstantial, are those of St. John in the *Revelations;* which treat professedly of such things as were

to befall *the servants of Jesus*[a], from the prophet's own days, down to that awful period, when all the mysterious councils of God, in regard to the Christian dispensation, shall be finally shut up in the day of judgment. To these predictions, then, a more particular attention is due, the rather because they have been fulfilling from the time of their delivery —*behold, I come quickly*— and, above all, because a *blessing* is pronounced on those, who *keep*, that is, who observe, who study and contemplate, *the sayings of this book.*

Assuredly, then, this study will be rewarded with signal benefits. And one sees immediately:

I. In the first place, that no small benefit must arise to those, who admit the completion of these prophecies, so far, I mean, as the tenour of the book makes it probable that they have been completed, *from the awful sense, which this conviction must needs give them of the Christian dispensation itself.*

That this dispensation, ushered in by so long a train of prophecies, should still be

[a] Rev. i. 1.

SERMON XII.

attended by others, through all the stages and periods of it; that secular empires should rise and fall, unnoticed, as it were, by the Spirit of God, while the kingdom of his Son is so peculiarly distinguished, and its whole history, in a manner, anticipated, by the most express predictions: that Jesus should be, as he says of himself, *the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end*[b], of all God's religious dispensations to mankind: that his *first coming*, or personal appearance in the flesh, should be signified from the foundation of the world, and from time to time more explicitly declared in a variety of successive prophecies, till the great event, at length, fulfilled them all: and that, together with this event (the foundation of others, still more illustrious) his *second coming*, in the future and gradual manifestations of his power (for they were to be *gradual)* should be distinctly marked out, and duly accomplished, in the fortunes of the Christian church, or of that kingdom, which he came to erect in the world; while this subject, and no other, engaged the ultimate attention of all the prophets: There is, I say, in this scheme of things, something so astonishingly vast, something so much above and beyond the attention that was

[b] Rev. ii. 8. xxi. 6.

ever known to be paid to any other person or thing in the compass of universal history, as must strike an awe into the hearts of all men, who consider Christianity in this point of view; and must compel the most negligent to confess, or suspect at least, That *such* a dispensation is a matter of no light moment, but, indeed, the most important in the eyes of Providence, and the most interesting to mankind, that can be conceived, or expressed.

If, then, there be reason, to *admit* the completion of such prophecies, respecting such a subject, in any considerable number of instances, within that space of time which is already elapsed; and, therefore, to *expect* that the remaining prophecies will, in like manner, be fulfilled, The conclusion is, that the dispensation of God through Christ is of the last consequence to the inhabitants of this world: And the obvious *use* of this conclusion will be, that it further obliges all serious men who have thus far profited by a study of the sacred oracles, to put that salutary question to themselves — *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation*[c] *?*

Connected with *this* use of prophecy,

[c] Heb. ii. 3.

SERMON XII.

II. A *second* is, That it sets before us, not the importance only, but the *truth* of Christianity, in the strongest light.

So many illustrious events falling in, one after another, just as the word of prophecy foretold they should, must afford the most convincing proof, That our Religion is, as it claims to be, of divine institution: a *proof*, the more convincing, because it is continually growing upon us; and, the farther we are removed from the source of our religion, the clearer is the evidence of its truth. Other proofs are supposed to be, and, in some degree, perhaps, are, weakened by a length of time. But this, from prophecy, as if to make amends for their defects, hath the peculiar privilege of strengthening by age itself: till hereafter, as we presume, the accumulated force of so much evidence shall overpower all the scruples of infidelity; and bring about, at length, that general conversion both of Jew and Gentile, which the sacred oracles have so expressly foretold.

In both these ways, then, by impressing on the mind the most affecting sense of Christianity; that is, by giving us, *first*, the most *awful view of its pretensions*, and *then*, by

producing the *firmest conviction of its truth*, the word of prophecy hath an evident tendency, in proportion as we see its accomplishment, to promote the great ends, for which it was given, till *the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord*, and *all the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness* [d].

These uses are general, and concern *all* men: The

III. *Next*, I shall mention, is more especially addressed to *thinking* and inquisitive men.

When the view of things, exhibited under the two preceding articles, has raised our admiration, to the utmost, of the divine councils in contriving, preparing, and at length executing so vast a scheme, as that of Christianity, for the benefit of mankind; we are led to expect that the *effect* will correspond to the *means* employed, and that a striking change will, at length, be brought about in the condition of the moral world.

[d] Hab. ii. 14. Is. xxvi. 9

SERMON XII.

But, in surveying the history of this new religion, the theme of so many prochecies, and the great, the favourite object, if I may so speak, of divine Providence, "some are not a little scandalized to observe that nothing hath come to pass in any degree equivalent to such an expence of forethought and contrivance; that, for a season, indeed, virtue and piety seemed to triumph, in the exemplary lives of the first converts to this religion, and in the overthrow of Pagan idolatry; but that this golden age was soon over; and that, now, for more than fourteen hundred years, the passions of men have kept their usual train, or rather have expatiated with more licence and fury in the Christian world, than in the Pagan; that *idolatry*, in all its forms, has revived in the bosom of Christianity; and, as to *private morals*, that this Religion has even made men worse than it found them, or, at best, of corrupt sensualists, has only made them intolerant and vindictive bigots; that, in a word, the *kingdom of heaven*, as it is called, has, hitherto, neither served to the glory of God, nor to the good of mankind; at least, to neither of these ends, in the *degree*, that might have been expected from such high pretensions."

The colouring of this picture, we will say, is too strong: but the outline, at least, is fairly given. The corruptions of the Christian world have been notorious and great; and though they are indeed the corruptions of men calling themselves Christians, and not the vices of Christianity, yet he who the most dispassionately contemplates so sad a scene, can hardly reconcile appearances to what must have been his natural expectations.

Here, then, the prophecies of this book, I mean, of the Apocalypse, come in to our relief. This book contains a detailed account of what would befall mankind under this last and so much magnified dispensation. It foretells all that history has recorded. It sets before us the corrupt state of the Christian world in almost as strong a light, as that in which our indignant speculatist himself has placed it. But it, likewise, opens better things to our view. It shews, that the *end* of this dispensation is to promote virtue and happiness; and that this end shall finally, but through many and long obstructions, be accomplished. It represents the cause of righteousness, as still maintaining itself in all the conflicts, to which it is exposed; as gradually gaining ground, and prevailing, through the secret aid of divine

SERMON XII.

Providence, over all opposition, till it obtains a firm and permanent establishment; till *the Saints reign* (not in a fanatical, but in the sober and evangelical sense of that word, *reign) in the earth*[e]; till *the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*[f].

So far, then, as these prophecies appear to have been completed, they reconcile us to that disordered scene, which hath hitherto been presented to us; and give repose to the anxious mind, in the assured hope of better things to come. The worst, that has *happened*, was foreseen; and the best, that we *conceive*, will hereafter come to pass. Thus, the reasonable expectations of men are answered, and the honour of God's government abundantly vindicated.

IV. The *last* use, I shall suggest to you, is that which immediately results from the study of the Apocalyptic prophecies *concerning Antichrist;* I mean, *the support that is hereby given to Protestantism against all the cavils and pretensions of its adversaries.*

For, if these prophecies are rightly applied to Papal Rome, and have, in part, been sig-

[e] Rev. v. 10. [f] Ibid. xix. 6.

nally accomplished in the history of that church, it is beyond all doubt, that our communion with it is dangerous; nay, that our separation from it is a matter of strict duty. *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues*[g] — are plain and decisive words, and, if allowed to be spoken of that church, bring the controversy between the Protestant and Papal Christians to a short issue.

I know, the advocates of Rome pretend, that, not a sense of duty, but a *spirit of revenge* operates in the minds of Protestants, when they affect to lay so great a stress on the Apocalyptic prophecies. "*Reward her, even as she rewarded you*[h]"—is, they say, another of their favourite texts, by which they take themselves to be as much obliged, as by that which they so commonly alledge for quitting her communion. It is not, therefore, to cover themselves from the imputation of schism, but to authorize the vengeance, they meditate against us, that we are stunned with the cry of Antichrist and Babylon[i]."

[g] Rev. xviii. 6. [h] Rev. xviii. 4.

[i] M. de Meaux: *L'Apocalypse avec une explication. Avertisement aux Protestants*, p. 303, &c. Par. 1690.

SERMON XII.

To this charge, I can only reply, That, if any Protestant writers have put that sense on the words — *reward her, as she rewarded you* — they must answer for their own temerity and indiscretion. They, who understand themselves, and the language of prophecy, disclaim the odious imputation. They say, That they neither admit the lawfulness of persecution in any case, on the account of religion, nor have the least thought of instigating the Christian world to any sanguinary attempts against the Papacy. What the *event* may be in the councils of Providence, is another consideration: But they neither avow, nor approve those principles, which tend to produce it. They, further, insist, That the two passages under consideration, though, both of them, expressed in the *imperative* form, require a very different construction: That the language of prophecy *seems* very often to authorise what it only foretells; and to command that which it barely permits: that, therefore, the sense of such passages is to be determined by the circumstances of the case; that, where obedience is lawful, there the *preceptive* form may be admitted; but, where it is not, there nothing more is intended than the certainty of the *event:* That this distinction is to be made in the present case; for that Christianity doth not

allow vindictive retaliations, or *holy wars*, for the sake of religion, and that offensive arms taken up in the cause of God (how confidently soever some have justified their zeal by the authority of the Jewish Law, ill-applied) are abominable and *antichristian:* Whence we rightly conclude, that — *reward her, as she rewarded you* — are words not to be taken injunctively; while those other words — *come out of her, my people* — expressing nothing but what it was previously our duty to do, are very clearly to be so taken.

Lastly, We say, that the context in the two places alledged, justifies this distinction. *Come out of her, my people.* Why? *That ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.* The reason is just, and satisfactory. *Reward her.* Why? No reason is assigned, or could be assigned consistently with the spirit of the Christian religion: It only follows, *as she has rewarded you* — words, which express only the *measure*, and the *equitable grounds* of the allotted punishment, not the *duty* of Christians to inflict it.

I return, then, from the confutation of this cavil (the most plausible, however, as well as invidious, which the wit of Rome has started

SERMON XII.

on this subject) to the conclusion, before laid down, That the completion of the Apocalyptic prophecies in the Papal apostasy, if seen and confessed, affords an unanswerable defence and vindication of the Protestant churches.

This conclusion, that THE POPE IS ANTICHRIST, and that other, that THE SCRIPTURE IS THE SOLE RULE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH, were the *two* great principles, on which the Reformation was originally founded. How the *first* of these principles came to be DISGRACED *among ourselves*, I have shewn in another discourse [k]. It may now be worth while to observe, in one word, through what fatal mismanagement the *latter* principle was even *generally* DISAVOWED and DESERTED.

When the Reformers had thrown off all respect for the Papal chair, and were for regulating the faith of Christians by the sacred scriptures, it still remained a question, *On what grounds, those scriptures should be interpreted.* The voice of the church, speaking by her schoolmen, and modern doctors, was universally, and without much ceremony, rejected. But the Fathers of the primitive church

[k] Sermon VIII.

were still in great repute among Protestants themselves; who dreaded nothing so much as the imputation of novelty, which they saw would be fastened on their opinions, and who, besides, thought it too presuming to trust entirely to the dictates of what was called *the private spirit*. The church of Rome availed herself with dexterity, of this prejudice, and of the distress to which the Protestant party was reduced by it. The authority of these ancient and venerable interpreters was sounded high by the Catholic writers; and the clamour was so great and so popular, that the Protestants knew not how, consistently with their own principles, or even in mere decency, to decline the appeal which was thus confidently made to that tribunal. The Reformers, too, piqued themselves on their superior skill in ancient literature; and were ashamed to have it thought that their adversaries could have any advantage against them in a dispute, which was to be carried on in that quarter. Other considerations had, perhaps, their weight with particular churches: But, for these reasons, chiefly, all of them forwardly closed in with the proposal of trying their cause at the bar of the ancient church: And, thus, shifting their ground, maintained henceforth, not that the scriptures were the sole rule of faith, but the

SERMON XII.

scriptures, *as interpreted by the primitive fathers.*

When the state of the question was thus changed, it was easy to see what would be the issue of so much indiscretion. The dispute was not only carried on in a dark and remote scene, into which the people could not follow their learned champions; but was rendered infinitely tedious, and, indeed, interminable. For those early writings, now to be considered as of the highest authority, were voluminous in themselves; and, what was worse, were composed in so loose, so declamatory, and often in so hyperbolical a strain, that no certain sense could be affixed to their doctrines, and any thing, or every thing, might, with some plausibility, be proved from them.

The inconvenience was sensibly felt by the Protestant world. And, after a prodigious waste of industry and erudition, a learned foreigner[1], at length, shewed the inutility and the folly of pursuing the contest any further. In a well-considered discourse, *On the use of the Fathers*, he clearly evinced, that their authority was much less, than was generally sup-

[1] M. Daillé.

posed, in *all* points of religious controversy; and that their judgment was especially incompetent in *those* points, which were agitated by the two parties. He evinced this conclusion by a variety of unanswerable arguments; and chiefly by shewing that the matters in debate were, for the most part, such as had never entered into the heads of those old writers, being, indeed, of much later growth, and having first sprung up in the barbarous ages. They could not, therefore, decide on questions, which they had no occasion to consider, and had, in fact, never considered; however their careless or figurative expression might be made to look that way, by the dextrous management of the controversialists.

This discovery had great effects. It opened the eyes of the more candid and intelligent inquirers: And our incomparable Chillingworth, with some others[m], took the advantage of it to set the controversy with the church of Rome, once more, on its proper foot; and to establish, for ever, the old principle, THAT THE BIBLE, and that only, (interpreted by our best reason) IS THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS.

[m] Lord Falkland, Lord Digby, Dr. Jer. Taylor, &c.

SERMON XII.

Thus, ONE of the two pillars, on which the Protestant cause had been established, was happily restored. And, though Mr. Mede, about the same time, succeeded as well in his attempts to replace the OTHER, yet, through many concurring prejudices, the merit of that service hath not, hitherto, been so generally acknowledged. Whether *the Pope be the Antichrist of the prophets,* is still by some Protestants made a question. Yet, it seems as if it would not continue very long to be so: And it may not be too much to expect, that this institution will, hereafter, contribute to put an end to the dispute.

The Reformation will, then, be secured against the two invidious charges of SCHISM and HERESY (for *neither* of which is there any ground, if *the Pope be Antichrist,* and if *the sole Rule of faith to a Christian be the canonical scriptures)* and will, thus, stand immoveably on its ancient and proper foundations.

In saying this, I do not, however, mean to assert, that the Reformation has no support, but in this principle — *that the Pope is Antichrist.* There are various other considerations, which are decisive in the controversy between

us and the Papists. So that, if the prophecies should, after all, be found to suit any other person or power, better than the Roman Pontif, we shall only have one argument the less to urge against his pretensions, and the Protestant cause, in the mean time, stands secure. But, on the supposition that the prophecies are rightly, and must be exclusively, applied to the church of Rome (of which every man will judge for himself, from the evidence hereafter to be laid before him) on this supposition, I say, it must be allowed that the shortest and best defence of the Protestant cause is that which is taken from the authority of those prophecies, because they expressly enjoin a separation from that society, to which they are applied.

Ye perceive, then, in all views, the utility of studying this prophecy of the *Revelations*, provided there be reason to admit the completion of it in the history of the Christian Church, and particularly in the history of Papal Rome. The *importance* and the *truth* of Christianity will be seen in their full light — The *wisdom* of the divine councils, in *permitting the Apostacy to take place for a time*, will be acknowledged — And the *honour* of our common *Protestant profession* will be effectually maintained.

CONCLUSION.

SERMON XII.

THIS LECTURE is now brought down to that point, from which, possibly, ye expected me to set out. But, in the entrance on an argument, new to many persons, and misunderstood by most, it seemed expedient to take a wide compass. The true *scriptural idea* of the subject, was to be opened, at large[n]; the *general argument* from prophecy, enforced[o]; the *method* of the prophetic system deduced, and further illustrated in a view of the prophecies more immediately respecting the Christian church[p]; Of *these* prophecies, those concerning *Antichrist, or the apostasy of Papal Rome,* were to be cleared of all prejudices and objections[q]; and the *principles,* on which the *Apocalyptic* prophecies, in particular, are to be explained, proposed and justified[r]: It was, further, necessary to bespeak your attention to the *argument* from the Apocalyptic prophecies, especially, concerning Antichrist, by shewing the several presumptions there are of its *force*[s]:

[n] Serm. I. II. III.
[o] Serm. IV.
[p] Serm. V. VI.
[q] Serm. VII. VIII.
[r] Serm. IX. X.
[s] Serm. XI.

and by setting before you the *uses*, to which this whole inquiry may be applied[t]. SERMON XII.

This preliminary course, then, though it has been tedious, will not be thought improper, if it may serve, in any degree, to prepare and facilitate the execution of the main design, which is, *To interpret and apply particular prophecies:* A work, of labour indeed; but not unpleasant in itself; and (if carried on with that diligence and sobriety, which are, in reason, to be supposed) capable, I think, of affording to fair and attentive minds the fullest satisfaction.

The SEASON, I know, may be thought unfavourable to such an attempt. For the main stress must be laid on prophecies, about which Christians themselves are not agreed, at a time when the number of those persons is supposed to be very great, and increasing every day, who are not easily brought to acknowledge the reality of *any* prophecies.

This *last* would be an unwelcome consideration, if the fact were certain; I mean, if the present state of religion were altogether such

[t] Sermon XII.

SERMON XII.

as some, perhaps, wish, and as others too easily apprehend, it to be. But I hope, and believe, it is not; the truth of the case, so far as I am able to form a judgment of it, being no more than this. A few fashionable men make a noise in the world; and this clamour, being echoed on all sides from the shallow circles of their admirers, misleads the unwary into an opinion, that the irreligious spirit is universal and uncontroulable. Whereas, the good and wise, are modest and reserved: having no doubt themselves concerning the foundation of their faith, they pay but little regard to the cavils, which empty or corrupt men throw out against it. They either treat those cavils with a silent contempt; or, they lament in secret the libertinism of the age, without taking any vigorous measures to check and oppose it. Besides, they rarely come into what is called, *free company*; and they are too well employed, and at the same time too well informed, to hearken after every idle publication, on the side of irreligion.

For these, and the like reasons, the number of true believers is overlooked; or thought to be less considerable than, in fact, it is, and would presently be known to be, if a just estimate were taken of them.

Let me then, under this persuasion, express myself in the spirit, and almost in the words, of an ancient apologist[u]—"Let no man too "hastily despair of the cause, we are now "pleading. When we stand up in its defence, "there are those who will lend an ear to us. "For, whatever the vain, or the vicious may "pretend, the prophetic writings are not fallen "so low in the esteem of mankind, but that "there are numberless persons of good sense "and serious dispositions, who wish to see the "truth of the Gospel confirmed by them; and "are ready to embrace that truth, when fairly "set before them, and supported by the clear "evidence of historical testimony and well-in-"terpreted scripture."

Such is the language, which I am not afraid to hold to the desponding party among us. But should my confidence, or my candour, transport me too far, should even *their* apprehensions be ever so well founded, the zeal of those, who preach the Gospel, is not to abate,

[u] Verum non est desperandum. Fortasse, *non canimus surdis.* Nec enim tam in malo statu res est, ut desint sanæ mentes, quibus et veritas placeat, et monstratum sibi rectum iter et videant et sequantur.

Lactant. Div. Inst. l. v. p. 417. *ed. Sparke.*

SERMON XII.

but to exert itself with new vigour under so discouraging a prospect. If there be a way left to strike conviction into the hearts of unbelievers, it must probably be, by pressing this great point of prophetic inspiration, and by turning their attention on a *miracle*, now wrought, or ready to be wrought before their eyes. Or, let the event be what it will, our duty is to illustrate the word of prophecy, and to enforce it; to withstand the torrent of infidelity with what success we may, and, if it should prevail over all our efforts, to make full proof, at least, of our sincerity and good will.

In the mean time, it becomes all *others* to retain and cultivate in themselves a respect for the prophetic writings; which either are, or, for any thing that has yet appeared, may be divine. To treat them, without the fullest conviction of their falshood, with neglect and scorn, is plainly indecent, and may be highly criminal and dangerous.

Josephus tells us, that, in the last dreadful ruin of his unhappy countrymen, it was familiar with them, *to make a jest of divine things, and to deride, as so many senseless tales and juggling impostures, the sacred oracles of*

their prophets [w]; though they were then fulfilling before their eyes, and even upon themselves.

But the case, perhaps, is different; and *we* have no concern, in the prophecies concerning Papal Rome.

What! Have WE no concern in those prophecies (supposing, I mean, that they are prophecies, at all, and, that there is reason for applying them to the church of Papal Rome) WE, who have but just been delivered from the more than Egyptian bondage, which they predict; and are, therefore, bound by every tye of interest, of gratitude, and of charity, to assert to ourselves, and to communicate to others, as far as we are able, the blessings of *that liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free* [x]. Have WE no concern in the several *uses*, mentioned in this discourse; and in many others, which I have not mentioned; it being well known, that *all inspired scripture* (of which prophecy is so eminent a part) *is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness* [y]?

[w] Ἐγέλατο δὲ τὰ θεῖα, καὶ τὲς τῶν προφητῶν θεσμὲς ὥσπερ ὠγυγικὰς λογοποιΐας, ἐχλεύαζον.

Fl. Joseph. B. J. l. iv. 6.

[x] Gal. v. 1.

[y] 2 Tim. iii. 16.

SERMON XII.

Or, supposing that we had no *direct* concern in these prophecies, and supposing, farther, that the divine authority of them was even *problematical;* still it may deserve to be considered, I mean, by men the most libertine, who have not yet convinced themselves, by an exact and critical inquiry, of their utter falshood and insignificancy; I say, it merits the reflexion of all such, That the *contempt* of the prophecies, under these circumstances, has a natural tendency to corrupt the temper and harden the heart. And is there no room to question, whether this conduct, plainly an *immoral* conduct, be adviseable or safe?

Let us then, on a principle of *self-love*, if not of piety, *keep the sayings of this book*, concerning THE MAN OF SIN. From many appearances, the appointed time for the full completion of them may not be very remote. And it becomes our prudence to take heed that we be not found in the number of those, to whom that awful question is proposed—*How is it, that ye do not discern the signs of this time?*

Nay, there are prophecies, which, in that case, may concern us more nearly, than we think. St. Paul applied ONE of these, to the unbelieving Jews; of whose mockery, and of

whose fate, ye have heared what their own historian witnesseth: And, if *we* equal their obdurate spirit, *that* prophecy may clearly be *applied*, and no man can say, that it was not *intended* to be applied, to *ourselves*.

Beware therefore (to sum up all in the tremendous words of the Apostle[z]) *Beware, lest that come upon you, which is spoken by the Prophets:* BEHOLD, YE DESPISERS, AND WONDER AND PERISH; FOR I WORK A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK, WHICH YE SHALL IN NO WISE UNDERSTAND, THOUGH A MAN DECLARE IT UNTO YOU.

[z] Acts xiii. 40, 41.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX:

CONTAINING

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER

TO THE AUTHOR OF THESE SERMONS,

WITH HIS ANSWER TO IT.

SOON after I had published this volume, I received an anonymous Letter, addressed to me at Thurcaston, of which the following is an exact copy.

LETTER TO DR. HURD.

SIR,

Some months ago it was reported, that Dr. Hurd was preparing to expound the Apocalypsis, and once more to prove the Pope to be Antichrist. The public were amazed. By the gay and by the busy world, the very attempt was treated as an object of ridicule. Polite scholars lamented, that you should be pre-

vailed on to give up your more solid and liberal studies, for such obscure and unprofitable researches. Your own brethren of the church hinted, that it would be far more prudent to observe a respectful silence with regard to those awful and invidious mysteries. A more than common share of merit was requisite to surmount such adverse prejudices. Your Sermons, Sir, have been perused with pleasure by many, who had the strongest dislike to the name and subject. Every one has admired the vastness of the plan, the harmony of the proportions, and the elegance of the ornaments; and if any have remarked a weakness in the foundations, it has been imputed to the nature of the ground; and the taste of the Patron has been arraigned rather than the skill of the Architect.

Since you have undertaken the care and defence of this extensive province, I may be allowed, less as an opponent than as a disciple, to propose to you a few difficulties; about which I have sought more conviction than I have hitherto obtained. From the general cast of your writings, I flatter myself that I am speaking to a candid critic, and to a philosophical divine; whose first passion is the love of truth. On this pleasing supposition, let me

venture to ask you, "*Whether, there is sufficient evidence that the Book of Daniel is really as ancient as it pretends to be.*" You are sensible, that from this point the Golden Chain of Prophecy, which you have let down from Heaven to earth, is partly suspended.

There are two reasons which still force me to with-hold my assent. I. The author of the Book of Daniel is two well informed of the revolutions of the Persian and Macedonian empires, which are supposed to have happened long after his death. II. He is too ignorant of the transactions of his own times. In a word, he is too exact for a Prophet, and too fabulous for a contemporary historian.

I. The first of these objections was urged, fifteen hundred years ago, by the celebrated Porphyry. He not only frankly acknowledged, but carefully illustrated the distinct and accurate series of history, contained in the book of Daniel, as far as the death of Antiochus Epiphanes; for beyond that period, the author seems to have had no other guide than the dim and shadowy light of conjecture. The four empires are clearly delineated, the expedition of Xerxes into Greece, the rapid conquest of Persia by Alexander, his untimely

death without posterity, the division of his vast monarchy into four kingdoms, one of which, Egypt, is mentioned by name, their various wars and intermarriages, the persecution of Antiochus, the prophanation of the Temple, and the invincible arms of the Romans, are described with as much perspicuity in the prophecies of Daniel, as in the histories of Justin and Diodorus. From such a perfect resemblance, the artful infidel would infer, that both were alike composed after the event. This conduct has supplied St. Jerom with a fund of learning, and an occasion of triumph: as if the philosopher, oppressed by the force of truth, had unwarily furnished arms for his own defeat. Yet, notwithstanding Jerom's confidence, and in spite of my inclination to side with the father, rather than with the adversary of the church; the reasoning of the latter may I fear be justified by the rules of logic and criticism.

May I not assume as a principle equally consonant to experience, to reason, and even to true religion; "That we ought not to admit "any thing as the immediate work of God, "which can possibly be the work of man; and "that whatever is said to deviate from the or-"dinary course of nature, should be ascribed

"to accident, to fraud, or to fiction; till we "are fully satisfied, that it lies beyond the "reach of those causes?" If we cast away this buckler, the blind fury of superstition, from every age of the world, and from every corner of the globe, will invade us naked and unarmed.

The eager trembling curiosity of mankind has ever wished to penetrate into futurity; nor is there perhaps any country, where enthusiasm and knavery have not pretended to satisfy this anxious craving of the human heart. These self-inspired prophets have strove by various arts to supply the want of a divine mission. Sometimes adapting their conjectures to the present situation of things, and to the passions and prejudices of those, for whom their oracles were intended, they have involved themselves in the mystic veil of dark, general, and ambiguous metaphors: and embracing an indefinite space, they have trusted to time and fortune for the accomplishment of their predictions, or to the industry of kind commentators for a favourable interpretation of them. Sometimes they have commenced prophets, and even true prophets at a very easy rate, by delivering the narrative of things already past under the name of some celebrated character of a distant

age. As the series of events gradually unfolds itself, those which the supposed ancient could have read only in the book of fate, are transcribed by the more enlightened modern from any common history.

Virgil (the example is innocent and unexceptionable) has left us specimens of both these prophetic arts: I have often wondered at the rashness of critics who have tryed to ascertain the subject of the fourth Eclogue, and to point out the wonderful infant, the restorer of a golden age. That modest and judicious Poet would not surely have risked the smallest part of his reputation, on the miscarriage of a woman, or the precarious life of a child. The picture is richly, nay profusely coloured; but the design is traced with so vague a pencil, that it might adapt itself to any events or to any interpretation; that it might equally suit a literal or an allegorical sense; the son of Pollio, of Antony, or of Augustus; the restoration of liberty, or the tranquillity of the world under one master. Far different are the prophecies delivered to Æneas concerning the fate and fortunes of his descendants. The Trojan hero is indulged with a full and distinct view of the most remote futurity; and the visionary prospect is closed by the mournful apparition

of a youth, who would have rivalled the greatest of his ancestors, had not the gods envied *such* virtues to Rome and to mankind.

From this single remark, we should think ourselves authorized to infer, that Virgil lived in the Augustan age; and that the sixth book was composed during the yet recent grief for the loss of young Marcellus. The Poet indeed meant not to deceive us: like the author of the Persian Letters, or of the Moral Dialogues, his only aim was to convey important truths under the pleasing cover of fiction. But had Virgil seriously pretended, that his sketch of the Roman history was a faithful transcript from an old Sibylline oracle; had Augustus from motives of policy favoured the deceit, and had the Romans adopted it with religious respect; would any man of sense want better evidence of the pious fraud, than the very clearness and precision of the prophecy? The unanimous judgment passed on the yet extant collection of the Sibylline Oracles affords an easy answer to this question. Every critic who has observed that their prophetic light ceases with the reign of Hadrian, has pronounced them without hesitation to be a forgery of that period.

However, as no Christian can dispute the reality of Divine Inspiration, nor any philosopher deny the possibility of it; the suspicion, that a prophecy too clear and precise was composed after the event, though extremely strong, is capable of being removed by still stronger positive evidence. Without insisting on any fanciful or impracticable conditions, we have (I think) a right to expect, that the existence of such a prophecy prior to its accomplishment should be proved, by the knowledge of it being generally diffused amongst an enlightened nation, previous to that period; and its public existence attested, by an unbroken chain of authentic writers. Till such evidence is produced, we may fairly sit down in a calm and well-grounded scepticism.

I have endeavoured to form something like this chain of witnesses in favour of the Book of Daniel; but without being able to carry it higher than the first century of the Christian æra. Josephus seems to expatiate with pleasure on the praises of that great man; whose character, in some instances, he proposed as a model for his own. He celebrates the various merit of Daniel, as a statesman, a prophet, and even as an architect. His prophetic writings (says Josephus) which are still extant,

evince his familiar intercourse with the Deity, and his perfect knowledge of futurity. He even possessed some material advantages above the rest of his inspired brethren ; not contented with declaring future events, he ascertains the time when they were to happen ; and instead of announcing calamities, he is most commonly the messenger of good news. The rise and fall of successive empires so clearly described and so punctually accomplished, ought to convince the disciples of Epicurus, that human affairs, instead of being left to the blind impulsion of chance, are pre-ordained by an all-directing Providence. Nothing can be desired fuller or more honourable for Daniel than this testimony of the Jewish historian. I am only concerned that he did not publish his Antiquities till the ninety-third year of the Christian æra ; two hundred and fifty-seven years after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, and more than six centuries later than the time, in which the Prophet is supposed to have flourished.

II. The Book of Daniel is partly of the prophetic and partly of the historic kind. With the account of his visions, the author mixes the memoirs of his life ; which lies the more open to our inspection, as it was

spent, not like those of the other Prophets in caves and deserts, but in the courts of princes and the great transactions of the world. Three incidents are more particularly mentioned: that he was educated with many other captive youths, among the Eunuchs of Nebuchadnezzar; that he was promoted by that prince to the government of Babylon for the interpretation of a dream; and that, under the reign of Darius the Mede, he was appointed the first of the three ministers or vizirs of the empire; and was soon after exposed to the most imminent danger, by the malice of his enemies, the imprudence of his sovereign, and his own pious constancy. To the first of these incidents I am so far from forming any objection, that it seems to me, in the true style of the oriental customs in war and government. But the two last are embarrassed with difficulties, from which I have not been able to extricate myself.

1. Although the most unfrequented paths have sometimes conducted the favourites of fortune to wealth and honours: yet I much doubt, whether any man has been appointed a great officer of state for his skill in divination. In the time of Chardin, the Persian astrologers possessed as much credit at the court of the Sophis, as the Chaldeans could possibly obtain

in that of Babylon; and both king and people paid the most implicit obedience to their predictions. Two astrologers constantly attended the Royal Person; nor was any measure adopted, however trifling or however important, without the previous sanction of these ministers of fate, who cost the state annually above four millions of French money. But notwithstanding they were thus highly favoured and respected, they were still confined within their own province; nor is there any instance of the Sovereign chusing his ministers, his generals, or his judges, amongst that class of men; the best qualified, as it should seem, for action, since they were the best acquainted with the consequences of their actions. The common sense of mankind has constantly preferred the mere human accomplishments of courage, capacity, and experience. The Roman augurs indeed presided in the senate, and led forth the armies of the common-wealth; but in this single exception, the sacerdotal was grafted on the political character. The first citizens, after rising gradually through the honours, and great offices of their country, were at length admitted to play the most powerful engine of the aristocracy.

2. I am disposed to believe that the subsequent merit of Daniel might justify the Mo-

narch's caprice. I will allow, (on the credit of the story of Susanna and the elders) that there never was a Judge of hands more clean, or of a more discerning eye; and that, in his ministerial capacity, he was ever attentive to the public interest, and careless of his own. I cannot deny, that Daniel, as a favourite, as a stranger, and as an honest man, must have the whole court of Babylon for his enemies; and am very sensible, that in the administration of a great empire, the purest virtue and the most shining abilities may afford room for misrepresentation and calumny. How often must the great Sully have yielded to those arts of courts, had he not possessed a sure resource in the sound understanding and generous heart of his friend and master! The situation of the Jewish and of the Huguenot Minister were somewhat similar. Both were issued from an oppressed race of obstinate sectaries; and it might be deemed a very artful contrivance to invent some test, which must force them to relinquish their place, or their principles; to forfeit the favour of their prince, or the confidence of their party. Thus far the comparison is tolerably exact. But the French ministers were well assured that the fate and innocence of Sully would be left to the common order of providence. The courtiers of Darius must appre-

hend, that the piety of Daniel would be asserted by a miraculous interposition. The people of Babylon, not many years before, had beheld the wonderful deliverance of Daniel's friends from the fiery furnace; and it would have been a strange project for these crafty statesmen, a second time to provoke the jealous God of Israel, to exalt the glory of their enemy, and to draw down destruction on their own heads.

This age indeed, to whom the gift of miracles has been refused, is apt to wonder at the indifference with which they were received by the ancient world. Instead of the instant terror, lasting conviction, and implicit obedience, we might rationally expect; the Jews as well as the Gentiles conducted themselves, as if they neither remembered nor believed the miracles to which they were witnesses. Although the hand of the Almighty was almost perpetually employed in tracing out those divine characters; they were no sooner formed, than they were obliterated from the minds of men. It may possibly be alledged, that faith was distracted by the multiplicity of false as well as of genuine miracles; whilst even the patrimony of the Lord was encompassed by rival deities.

——— Who from the pit of hell,
Roaming to seek their prey on earth, durst fix
Their seats long after next the seat of God:
Their altars by his altar; Gods ador'd
Among the nations round; and durst abide
Jehovah thund'ring out of Sion, thron'd
Betwixt the Cherubim ———

But this solution is more proper, I am afraid, to aggravate than to alleviate the pressure of the difficulty. Counterfeit money may pass current with the true; since both are coined by human hands and human industry: But I have always considered Salmoneus imitating Jove's thunder by rattling with a brazen chariot over a brazen bridge, as the most contemptible legend in the whole compass of the Grecian mythology.

3. The law of the Medes and Persians is represented as a constitutional sanction, which put it out of Darius's power to revoke his rash edict. Such legal restraints are the natural offspring of free governments; but ill suit with the genius of Asiatic despotism. From the inaccessible solitude of a seven-fold palace the king of the Medes disposed without controul of the lives and property of his subjects: nor does there exist a more dreadful act of autho-

rity, than the retaliation inflicted by Darius on Daniel's enemies; who, to the number of a hundred and twenty, were cast, with their wives and children, into the den of lions. If the Persians enjoyed any degree of freedom among their mountains, they became at the same time slaves and conquerors; and a formal determination of their judges stands recorded by Herodotus. "That it was lawful for the king to do whatever he pleased. There are indeed some instances, where a wise despot will check himself, and a foolish one will find himself checked by the nature of things. Such institutions as are derived from Divine authority, ancient custom, or general opinion, cannot be shaken without endangering the foundations of his own throne. But it would be truly unaccountable, that his cooler reason should not be permitted to correct the passion or surprize of a moment; and that the occasional declarations of his pleasure should not be annihilated by the same authority, which produced them. May I not assert, that the Greek writers who have so copiously treated of the affairs of Persia, have not left us the smallest vestige of a restraint, equally injurious to the monarch, and prejudicial to the people?"

4. The edict of Darius, "that during thirty "days, whosoever should ask any petition of "either god or man, save only of the king, "should be cast into the den of lions," implied an almost total suspension of religious worship; which consists much more in prayer than in thanksgiving. Such an extraordinary interdict, by depriving the people of the comforts, and the priests of the profits of religion, must have diffused a general discontent throughout his empire; which might easily have been inflamed into sedition and civil war. With what colours could the ministers of Darius gloss over a measure big with every mischief, and destitute of the smallest advantage? In what language could they address themselves to the reason, or even to the passions of their Sovereign; who is described to be of an advanced age, and a lover of justice and moderation? But is there any character, which, with the utmost latitude of supposition, nay account for this edict? An irreligious prince may be indiscreet enough to treat with ridicule whatever is held sacred by his subjects; but he will entertain too great a contempt both for the people, and for popular superstition, ever to think of forcibly separating them from each other. The bigot is actuated by a warmer principle than the infidel; but his attachment

to his own mode of worship rises in proportion to his hatred of all others. Had Darius, as a disciple of Zoroaster, shut up the temples of the idolaters, he would have directed the fires of the Magi to have blazed with redoubled ardour. Even those tyrants who, destitute of human virtues, have aspired to divine honours, have grafted their pretensions on the established religions. To be seated between Castor and Pollux, to obtain the embraces of the Moon, to confer with Jupiter of the Capitol, and to place his image in the temple of Jerusalem, would have gratified the wildest ambition of Caligula. But to suspend during thirty days the most universal propensity of mankind, is a strain of wanton despotism unparalleled in the history of the world; for the interdicts of the Popes were of a quite different nature. They were not the arbitrary prohibitions of a temporal monarch; but a chastisement, inflicted by the vicegerent of Christ, who excluded the offenders from the benefits of Christianity, till they had satisfied the Deity, offended in the person of his ministers.

5. There yet remains a stronger, or at least a more palpable objection, against the veracity of the author of the book of Daniel: "The "high probability that Darius the Mede never

" existed; or, what amounts to the same, that " no prince of that name or nation reigned at " Babylon, between the time of Nebuchad- " nezzar and that of Cyrus." It would be to little purpose to expatiate on the uncertainty of ancient history, and the careless vanity of the Greek writers. The outlines of the history of Babylon are known to us with uncommon precision. The Canon of Ptolemy contains the series of its kings, deduced from authentic records, attested by astronomical observations, and confirmed by the fragments of Berosus, which are still extant in Josephus. Berosus describes the conquests and buildings of Nebuchadnezzar, and only omits to mention the metamorphosis of that monarch into an ox. His three immediate successors, were of his own family; the fourth, Nabonadius, was a Babylonian raised to the throne by the conspirators who murdered his predecessor; and cast down from it by the victorious arms of Cyrus king of Persia. In this close series of the Babylonian and Persian dynasties, there cannot be found the smallest interval, which will admit a Median prince.

Of the various expedients devised to elude this difficulty, there is one only which can deserve our notice; both as the most tolerable in

itself, and as having been embraced by the chronologists of the most distinguished merit and reputation; by Usher, Prideaux, Sir Isaac Newton, &c. In their extreme distress, the Cyaxares of Xenophon offered himself to their imagination, as the properest person to support the character of Darius the Mede. For this purpose, they have supposed that he reigned two years over the Babylonian empire; after it had been subdued by the arms of Cyrus, his nephew and his lieutenant. Such is their hypothesis, which falls to the ground if the Cyropædia is a romance; and is overthrown by it, should that noble performance be received as a genuine history.

1. Without insisting on the opinion of Plato and Tully, I would rather appeal to your own feelings; as I cannot doubt your familiar acquaintance with the writings of the Attic Bee. Compare the Anabasis with the Cyropædia; and *feel* the difference between truth and fiction; between the lively and copious variety of the one, and the elegant poverty of the other. A few general incidents, thinly scattered through a diffuse work, and destitute of any notes of geography or chronology, compose the life of Cyrus; which seems lost in a multitude of speeches, councils, reflections, and fa-

miliar episodes. Xenophon was a philosopher and a soldier; and if we unravel with any care the fine texture of the Cyropædia, we shall discover in every thread the Spartan discipline and the philosophy of Socrates. The only part which has the air of real history, is the judicious digression, where Xenophon compares the degeneracy of the modern Persians with the wise institutions of their founder. He possessed the best opportunities of examining both the one and the other, whilst he served in the camp of the younger Cyrus, and traversed, with the immortal ten thousand, the greatest part of the provinces of Artaxerxes. The first Cyrus was confessedly a great man. The conquest of Asia is a sufficient testimony of his abilities; and the name of Father given him by the Persians after his death, must stand as the surest evidence of his virtues. But the hero of the Cyropædia is drawn as a *perfect character;* a monster as fabulous, and less interesting than those of Ariosto. His wise councils are never, in a single instance, seduced by passion, misled by error, or disappointed by accident. Xenophon labours to establish the empire of prudence; his countryman Herodotus had entertained himself with displaying the tyranny of fortune; and both writers, whilst they inculcate the moral pre-

cept, seem alike, though by opposite paths, to deviate from historic truth.

2. But if the Cyropædia be admitted as a genuine history, Darius the Mede is still excluded from the throne of Babylon, since Cyaxares himself never ascended it. When the Cyrus of Xenophon besieged that great city, he had gradually shaken off all dependance on his uncle, and assumed to himself the supreme command, and exclusive advantages of the war. The strength of his army consisted of seventy thousand natural Persians, solely attached to their hereditary prince, from every motive of duty, gratitude, and interest. He was followed by a various train of nations, allies and subjects, all subdued by his arms and policy. About forty thousand Medes, who served under his banners, had long since been taught to despise the weakness, and to disobey the commands of their sovereign. After the conquest, Cyrus was solemnly inaugurated king of Babylon, with every circumstance of pomp and greatness, which could dazzle the eyes of the multitude. Some time afterwards he visited his uncle at Ecbatana, presented him with rich gifts, the spoils of Asia, accepted his only daughter in marriage, and very politely told the King of the Medes, that he had set

apart for him, one of the finest palaces of Babylon; that whenever he should chuse to come to that city, he might find himself, *as if he were still in his own dominions.*

If these observations are founded in truth and nature; it will follow, that the author of the Book of Daniel has entertained us with incredible stories, which happened under an imaginary monarch. So much error and so much fiction are incompatible with an inspired, or even with a contemporary, writer. But if the prophecies were framed three or four centuries after the Prophet's death, it was much easier for the counterfeit Daniel to *foretel* great and recent events, than to compose an accurate history or probable romance of a dark and remote period.

The question is curious in itself, important in its consequences, and in every light worthy the attention of a critical divine. This consideration justifies the freedom of my address, and the hopes I still entertain, that you may be able and willing to dispell the mist, that hangs, either over my eyes, or over the subject itself. On my side, I can only promise, that whatever you shall think proper to communicate, shall be received with the candor

which I owe to myself, and with the deference, so justly due to your name and abilities,

I am, Sir,
with great esteem,
your obedient humble servant,

P. S. You will be pleased, Sir, to address your answer *To Daniel Freeman, Esq. at the Cocoa Tree, Pall Mall:* but if you have any scruple of engaging with a mask, I am ready, by the same channel, to disclose my real name and place of abode; and to pledge myself for the same *discretion*, which, in my turn, I shall have a right to expect.

I had neither leisure nor inclination to enter into controversy with this stranger (for which there was the less occasion, as he had disputed no principle or opinion advanced by me in the Sermons); but, as I knew, whoever he was, that he would complain, or rather *boast*, of being wholly unnoticed by me, I sent him this answer.

ANSWER TO THE FOREGOING LETTER.

Thurcaston, August 29, 1772.

SIR,

Your very elegant letter on the antiquity and authenticity of the Book of Daniel (just now received) finds me here, if not without leisure, yet without books, and therefore in no condition to enter far into the depths of this controversy; which indeed is the less necessary, as every thing, that relates to the subject, will come, of course, to be considered by my learned successors in the new Lecture. For, as the prophecies of Daniel make an important link in *that chain, which,* as you say, *has been let down from heaven to earth* (but not by the Author of the late Sermons, who brought into view only what he had found, not invented) the grounds, on which their authority rests, will, without doubt, be carefully examined, and, as I suppose, firmly established.

But, in the mean time, and to make at least some small return for the civility of your address to me, I beg leave to trouble you with

two or three short remarks, such as occur to me, on the sudden, in reading your letter.

Your main difficulties are these two: 1. That the author of the Book of Daniel is too clear for a prophet; as appears from his prediction of the Persian and Macedonian affairs: And 2. too fabulous for a contemporary historian; as is evident, you suppose, from his mistakes, chiefly, I think, in the vith chapter.

1. The first of these difficulties is an extraordinary one. For why may not prophecy, if the Inspirer think fit, be as clear as history? Scriptural prophecy, whence your idea of its obscurity is taken, is *occasionally* thus clear, I mean after the event: And Daniel's prophecy of the revolutions in the Grecian empire would have been obscure enough to Porphyry himself, before it.

But your opinion, after all, when you come to explain yourself, really is, as one should expect, that, as a prophet, Daniel is not clear enough: for you enforce the old objection of Porphyry by observing, That, where a pretended prophecy is clear to a certain point of time, and afterwards obscure and shadowy,

there common sense leads one to conclude that the author of it is an impostor.

This reasoning is plausible, but not conclusive, unless it be taken for granted that a prophecy must, in all its parts, be equally clear and precise: whereas, on the supposition of real inspiration, it may be fit, I mean it may suit with the views of the Inspirer, to predict some things with more perspicuity, and in terms more obviously and directly applicable to the events in which they are fulfilled, than others. But, further, this reasoning, whatever force it may have, has no place here; at least, you evidently beg the question when you urge it; because the persons, you dispute against, maintain, That the subsequent prophecies of Daniel are equally distinct with the preceding ones concerning the Persian and Macedonian empires, at least so much of them as they take to have been fulfilled, and that, to judge of the rest, we must wait for the completion of them.

However, you admit that the suspicion arising from the *clearest* prophecy may be removed by direct positive evidence that it was composed before the event. But then you carry your notions of that evidence very far,

when you require "that the existence of such "a prophecy prior to the accomplishment "should be proved by the knowledge of it "being generally diffused amongst an enlight- "ened nation, previous to that period, and its "public existence attested by an unbroken "chain of authentic writers."

What you here claim as a matter of *right*, is, without question, very desirable, but should, I think, be accepted, if it be given at all, as a matter of courtesy. For what you describe is the utmost evidence that the case admits: but what right have we, in this or any other subject whether of natural or revealed religion, to the utmost evidence? Is it not enough that the evidence be sufficient to induce a reasonable assent? And is not that assent reasonable, which is paid to real evidence, though of an inferior kind, when uncontrouled by any greater? And such evidence we clearly have for the authenticity of the book of Daniel, in the reception of it, by the Jewish nation, down to the time of Jesus, whose appeal to it supposes and implies that reception to have been constant and general: Not to observe that the testimony of Jesus is further supported by all the considerations that are alledged for his own divine character. To this evidence, which

is positive so far as it goes, you have nothing to oppose, but surmise and conjecture, that is, nothing that deserves to be called evidence. But I doubt, Sir, you take for granted, that the claim of inspiration is never to be allowed, so long as there is a possibility of supposing that it was not given.

II. In the second division of your Letter, which is longer and more laboured than the first, you endeavour to shew that the *historical* part of the book of Daniel, chiefly that of the sixth chapter, is false and fabulous, and, as such, confutes and overturns the *prophetical*. What you say on this head is contained under *five* articles.

1. You think it strange that Daniel, or any other man, should be advanced to a great office of state, *for his skill in divination*.

But here, first, you forget that Joseph was thus advanced, and for the same reason: Or, if you object to this instance, what should hinder the advancement either of Joseph or Daniel (when their skill in divination had once brought them into the notice and favour of their sovereign) for what you call *mere human accomplishments?* For such assuredly both

these great men possessed, if we may believe the plain part of their story, which asserts of Joseph, and indeed proves, that he was, in no common degree, *discreet and wise;* and of Daniel, that *an excellent spirit was found in him,* nay that he had *knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom,* over and above his *understanding in all visions and dreams.* In short, Sir, though princes of old might not make it a rule to chuse their ministers out of their soothsayers, yet neither would their being soothsayers, if they were otherwise well accomplished, prevent them from being ministers: Just as in modern times, though churchmen have not often, I will suppose, been made officers of state, even by bigotted princes, because they were churchmen, yet neither have they been always set aside from serving in those stations, when they have been found eminently qualified for them.

2. Your next exception is, That a combination could scarce have been formed in the court of Babylon against the favourite minister (though such factions are common in other courts) because the courtiers of Darius *must have apprehended that the piety of Daniel would be asserted by a miraculous interposition;* of which they had seen a striking in-

stance. And here, Sir, you expatiate with a little too much complacency on the strange indifference which the ancient world shewed to the gift of miracles. You do not, I dare say, expect a serious answer to this charge; Or, if you do, it may be enough to observe, what I am sure your own reading and experience must have rendered very familiar to you, that the strongest belief or conviction of the mind perpetually gives way to the inflamed selfish passions; and that, when men have any scheme of interest or revenge much at heart, they are not restrained from pursuing it, though the scaffold and the axe stand before them in full view, and have perhaps been streaming but the day before with the blood of other state-criminals. I ask not, whether miracles have ever *actually* existed, but whether you do not think that multitudes have been firmly *persuaded* of their existence: And their indifference about them is a fact which I readily concede to you.

3. Your third criticism is directed against what is said of *the law of the Medes and Persians, that it altereth not;* where I find nothing to admire, but the extreme rigour of Asiatic despotism. For I consider this irrevocability of the law, when once promulgated by the Sovereign, not as contrived to be a check

on his will, but rather to shew the irresistible and fatal course of it. And this idea was so much cherished by the despots of Persia, that, rather than revoke the iniquitous law, obtained by surprize, for exterminating the Jews, Ahasuerus took the part, as we read in the book of Esther, (and as Baron Montesquieu, I remember, observes) to permit the Jews to defend themselves against the execution of it. Whence we see how consistent this law is with the determination of the Judges, quoted by you from Herodotus — "That it was lawful for the King to do whatever he *pleased*" — for we understand, that he did not please, that his law, when once declared by him, should be altered.

You add, under this head, "May I not assert, that the Greek writers, who have so copiously treated of the affairs of Persia, have not left us the smallest vestige of a restraint, equally injurious to the monarch, and prejudicial to the people?" I have not the Greek writers by me to consult; but a common book I chance to have at hand, refers me to one such vestige in a very eminent Greek Historian, Diodorus Siculus. Lowth's Comm. in loc.

4. A fourth objection to the historic truth of the book of Daniel is taken, with more

plausibility, from the matter of this law, which, as you truly observe, was very strange for the King's councillors to advise, and for any despot whatsoever to enact.

But 1. I a little question whether prayer was so constant and considerable a part of Pagan worship, as is supposed; and, if it was not, the prejudices of the people would not be so much shocked by this interdict, as we are ready to think. Daniel indeed prayed three times a day: but the idolaters might content themselves with praying now and then at a stated solemnity. It is clear that when you speak of *depriving men of the comforts, and the priests of the profits of religion*, you have Christian and even modern principles and manners in your eye: perhaps, in the *comforts*, you represented to yourself a company of poor inflamed Huguenots under persecution; and, in the *profits*, the lucrative trade of Popish masses. But, be this as it may, it should be considered, 2. that this law could not, in the nature of the thing, suppress all prayer, if the people had any great propensity to it. It could not suppress *mental* prayer: it could not even suppress *bodily worship*, if performed, as it easily might be, in the night, or in secret. Daniel, it was well known, was

used to pray in open day-light, and in a place exposed to inspection from his usual manner of praying; which manner, it was easily concluded, so zealous a votary, as he was, would not change or discontinue, on account of the edict. Lastly, though the edict passed for thirty days, to make sure work, yet there was no doubt but the end proposed would be soon accomplished, and then it was not likely that much care would be taken about the observance of it.

All this put together, I can very well conceive that extreme envy and malice in the courtiers might suggest the idea of such a law, and that an impotent despot might be flattered by it. Certainly, if what we read in the third chapter be admitted, That *one* of these despots required all people, nations, and languages to worship his image on pain of death, there is no great wonder that *another* of them should demand the exclusive worship of himself, for a month [a]; nay perhaps he might think himself civil, and even bounteous to his gods, when he left them a share of the other eleven. For, as to the presumption—

——Nihil est quod credere de se
Non possit, cui laudatur Diis æqua potestas.

[a] Judith iii. 8.

5. A fifth, and what you seem to think the strongest objection to the credit of the book of Daniel, is, "That no such person, as Darius the Mede, is to be found in the succession of the Babylonish princes [You mean, as given in Ptolemy's Canon and the Greek writers] between the time of Nebuchadnezzar and that of Cyrus."

In saying this, you do not forget, nor disown, what our ablest chronologers have said on the subject: But then you object, that Xenophon's Cyaxares has been made, (to serve a turn) to personate Darius the Mede, and yet that Xenophon's book, whether it be a romance, or a true history, overturns the use which they have made of this hypothesis.

1. I permit myself, perhaps, to be too much flattered by your civility in referring me to my own taste, rather than to the authority of Cicero: But the truth is, I am much disposed to agree with you, "that, if we unravel "with any care the fine texture of the Cyro-"pædia, we shall discover in every thread the "Spartan discipline and the philosophy of So-"crates." But then, as the judicious author chose to make so recent a story as that of Cyrus, and so well known, the vehicle of his

political and moral instructions, he would be sure to keep up to the *truth* of the story, as far as might be; especially in the leading facts, and in the principal persons, as we may say, of the drama. This obvious rule of decorum such a writer, as Xenophon, could not fail to observe: And therefore, on the supposition that his Cyropædia is a romance, I should conclude certainly that the outline of it was genuine history.

But, 2. if it be so, you conclude that there is no ground for thinking that Darius the Mede ever reigned at Babylon, because Cyaxares himself never reigned there.

Now, on the idea of Xenophon's book being a romance, there might be good reason for the author's taking no notice of the short reign of Cyaxares; which would break the unity of his work, and divert the reader's attention too much from the hero of it: while yet the omission could hardly seem to violate historic truth, since the lustre of his hero's fame, and the real power which, out of question, he reserved to himself, would make us easily forget or overlook Cyaxares. But, as to the *fact*, it seems no way incredible, that Cyrus should concede to his royal ally, his uncle, and his father-in-law

(for he was all these) the *nominal* possession of the sovereignty—or that he should *share* the sovereignty with him—or, at least, that he should leave the *administration*, as we say, in his hands at Babylon, while he himself was prosecuting his other conquests at a distance. Any of these things is supposable enough; and I would rather admit any of them, than reject the express, the repeated, the circumstantial testimony of a not confessedly fabulous historian.

After all, Sir, I doubt, I should forfeit your good opinion, if I did not acknowledge that some, at least, of the circumstances, which you have pointed out, are such as one should hardly expect at first sight. But then such is the condition of things in this world; and what is *true* in human life is not always, I had almost said, not often, that which was to be previously expected: whence, an indifferent romance is, they say, more *probable* than the best history. But should any or all of these circumstances convince you perfectly that some degree of error or fiction is to be found in the book of Daniel, it would be too precipitate to conclude that therefore the whole book was of no authority. For, at most, you could but infer, that the historical part, in which those

circumstances are observed, namely the sixth chapter, is not genuine: Just as hath been adjudged, you know, of some other pieces, which formerly made a part of the book of Daniel. For it is not with these collections, which go under the name of the prophets, as with some regularly connected system, where a charge of falsehood, if made good against one part of it, shakes the credit of the whole. Fictitious histories may have been joined with true prophecies, when all that bore the name of the same person, or any way related to him, came to be put together in the same volume: But the detection of such misalliance could not affect the prophecies, certainly not those of Daniel, which respect *the latter times;* for these have an intrinsic evidence in themselves, and assert their own authenticity in proportion as we see, or have reason to admit, the accomplishment of them.

And now, Sir, I have only to commit these hasty reflections to your candour; a virtue, which cannot be separated from the love of truth, and of which I observe many traces in your agreeable letter. And if you would indulge this quality still further, so as to conceive the possibility of that being *true and reasonable*, in matters of religion, which may

seem strange, or, to so lively a fancy as your's, even ridiculous, you would not hurt the credit of your excellent understanding, and would thus remove one, perhaps a principal, occasion of *those mists which*, as you complain, *hang over these nice and difficult subjects.*

I am, with true respect,

Sir, &c.

R. H.

I should not perhaps have thought it worth while to print either of these Letters, if a noble person had not made it necessary for me to give the *former* to the publick, by doing this honour (though without my leave or knowledge) to the *latter*. By which means, however, we are now at length informed (after the secret had been kept for twice twelve years) that the anonymous Letter-writer was Edward Gibbon, Esq. afterwards the well-known author of "The History of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*[b]."

[b] See his Posthumous Works, published by Lord Sheffield, 2 vols. in 4to. Lond. 1796. Vol. I. p. 463.

Of Mr. Gibbon's Letter to me, I have no more to say: And of his *History*, only what may be expressed in few words.

It shews him, without doubt, to have possessed parts, industry, and learning; each in a degree that might have entitled him to a respectable place among the compilers of ancient history. But these talents were disgraced, and the fruit of them blasted, by a FALSE TASTE OF COMPOSITION: that is, by *a raised, laboured, ostentatious style*; effort in writing being mistaken, as it commonly is, for energy—by *a perpetual affectation of wit, irony, and satire*; generally misapplied; and always out of place, being wholly unsuited to the historic character—and, what is worse, by a *free-thinking libertine spirit*; which spares neither morals nor religion; and must make every honest man regard him as a bad citizen, as well as writer.

These miscarriages may, all of them, be traced up to one common cause, an EXCESSIVE VANITY.

Mr. Gibbon survived, but a short time, his favourite work. Yet he lived long enough to know that the most and best of his readers were much unsatisfied with him. And a few

years more may, not improbably, leave him without one admirer. — Such is the fate of those, who will write themselves into fame, in defiance of all the principles of true taste, and of true wisdom!

R. W.

Hartlebury Castle, Nov. 18, 1796.

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